

Quality assurance practices: The perspectives of teachers and quality assurers in selected rural Tanzanian community secondary schools

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Abstract

This paper investigated Quality Assurers and teachers' perspectives on quality assurance practices in rural community secondary schools in Wanging'ombe district of Njombe Region in southern Tanzania. It sought to determine the relevance of quality assurance (QA) and the role of QA in improving school teaching and learning practices and the challenges of QA in rural Tanzanian community secondary schools. Mixed approach and cross-sectional research design were used. Thematic and descriptive data analysis were employed. The study demonstrates that the focus of QA practices includes elements like time management, lesson plans, school infrastructure, examination setting, scheme of work, teachers' records, and students' academic reports. It identifies the lack of funds and transport facilities and the limited accessibility of some schools as key challenges, and it concludes that it is necessary to provide QAs with adequate resources to enable regular school visits.

Keywords: Quality assurance practices, teachers' perspectives, Community Secondary Schools, Rural Tanzania

1.0 Introduction

School quality assurance (QA) practice is widely regarded as a critical source of competitive advantage in the ever-changing environment of the education sector (Ololube et al., 2014). Quality assurance is related to the need to promote and maintain the quality of teaching and learning practices, in this case, the quality of education in secondary schools. However, quality assurance

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is perceived differently by different stakeholders in secondary education (Muhammad & Khalid, 2022). Thus, some perceive quality assurance as an aspect of quality control, a term most suitable in the manufacturing sector (Skedsmo & Huber, 2018). It is negatively perceived by some as a suppressive instrument to academic freedom and institutional autonomy (Looney & Clemson, 2020). Yet others perceive it as a punitive instrument against teachers and education institutions including secondary schools (Bassey, Owan; & Agunwa, 2019). It is also negatively perceived to be an intrusive supervisory instrument especially when staff regard themselves as skilled professionals who themselves do not require any form of supervision (UNESCO, 2018).

Quality assurance is a continuous development of the quality of education through a systematic process, for which openness to comparison with others based on agreed benchmarks is vital (Arop, Owan & Ibor, 2019). Quality assurance promotes accountability of secondary schools to education stakeholders. The Tanzanian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST, 2023) defines the objective of quality assurance (QA) as ensuring compliance to policies, laws, regulations and other standard setting instruments in the delivery of pre-primary, primary and secondary education, including special and adult education at those levels.

According to the United Republic of Tanzania (URT, 2023), secondary schools' Quality Assurers perform such activities as monitoring the conduct of external quality assurance activities by Regional and District Levels Quality Assurance Offices to ensure compliance with policies, legislation, standards and guidelines related to the delivery of secondary education. QAs also monitor the carrying out of periodic school physical condition survey and recommend remedial measures so as to continuously improve the quality of secondary education. Moreover, QAs advise on matters arising from the quality assurance experience pertaining to secondary education and conduct research on best practices on quality assurance in the delivery of secondary education and advise accordingly. QAs monitor and evaluate the quality and implementation of internal quality assurance plans and services for secondary education as well as special, adult and non-formal education at secondary levels.

School quality assurance is also a major instrument for controlling and promoting the quality of school performance (Shackleton & Ehren, 2014). School performance is generally viewed in terms of all activities taking place within the school context, including teachers' job performance, students' academic achievement and improvement of the school environment and all

other good practices taking place within the school context. Specific quality assurance standards that are used in assessing the quality of education in terms of teaching and learning have been established locally and globally. Thus, sanctions for failing schools and rewards for well-performing schools have contributed to stimulating and pressurizing schools to meet nationally defined targets and objectives (Lupimo, 2014).

Quality assurance practices also involve regulating schools to enforce compliance with government policies, e.g., on staffing, curriculum delivery, infrastructure, management, corporate life, laboratory practical and library services (Kotirde & Yunos, 2014; Mohammed, 2021). Unfortunately, these latter aspects of school quality assurance are, in most cases, left out of consideration in our local Tanzanian context, as the focus tends to be directed to only a few aspects of curriculum implementation. Most community secondary schools in Tanzania are located within local communities, sometimes in remote or rural areas and most were established to bridge the gap of access and distance to secondary schools and are perceived as low-performing, less equipped and hard-to-reach schools that do not offer quality education (Diocles, 2020). The objective of this study was to investigate the perspectives of teachers and quality assurers on quality assurance practices respecting such community secondary schools as are in Wanging'ombe District of Tanzania.

2.0 Literature Review

School quality assurance is globally considered an essential instrument for ensuring the provision of quality education to enable a nation to compete in the ever-changing world economy. It is a form of evaluation that involves measurement, testing and evaluation of educational activities in school systems for the purpose of improving the standards and quality of the offered education programmes. As school quality assurance is increasingly used to improve education, it is important to gain more insights into its implications in specific areas and to find ways to improve its performance (Gustafsson, 2014). Quality acquisition capacity is a vital component for teacher productivity and quality control (Wanzare, 2002; Ololube, 2014). Quality assurance approaches can include mechanisms that are external or internal to schools. External mechanisms may include national or regional school evaluations and/or large-scale student assessments, and internal mechanisms may include school self-evaluation, staff appraisal and classroom-based student assessments (Looney & Clemson, 2020).

Nations conduct quality assurance for various purposes. For instance, in Scotland, school quality assurance is done annually for three purposes; to report on the effectiveness of education in schools and other educational institutions and to make recommendations for policy improvement, to evaluate the quality of education, and to advise higher education authorities to ensure that educational initiatives are effectively enforced (Looney & Clemson, 2020). In the United States of America (USA), school quality assurance is conducted for the purpose of meeting students' learning needs under the "No Child Left Behind" policy (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007).

A UAE study by Alkutich (2015) that 80% of respondents felt that school quality assurance supported teachers and helped them improve their pedagogical practices. Meanwhile, 40% of the teacher respondents reported that school quality assurance practices provide them with teaching and learning materials and help them to improve their teaching strategies in different subjects. 80% of the teachers perceived that school quality assurance reports and recommendations are useful in addressing teaching and learning challenges (Alkutich, 2015).

However, school evaluation procedures may lack openness and can thus be unclear to stakeholders (Hulpiau and Waeytens, 2003; Sridharan et al., 2015). When the quality of an evaluation programme cannot be ensured, both the quality of the education and students' learning processes can be negatively affected (Lucander & Christersson, 2020).

In Tanzania, school quality assurance is conducted to check if schools comply with the provisions of the Education policy, guidelines, provisions and Acts; and to ascertain whether schools are managed properly and efficiently (URT, 2023; Mmbando & Hongoke, 2010). Matete (2009) shows, in his study of Mbeya City District, Tanzania, that school quality assurance plays a vital role in improving teaching and learning practices. His study found that teachers perceive the advice and feedback given by QAs through reports and recommendations to be useful for improving their teaching career.

According to Rao and Kumar (2004), teachers' job performance in any educational institution mainly depends on quality assurance practices, teachers' characteristics such as knowledge base, sense of responsibility and inquisitiveness. Other factors include students' readiness to learn and engagement in academic work, lesson structure and communication and learning aspects such as involvement and success. Additionally, classroom-related factors such as the teaching and learning environment and climate, organization and management also play a vital

role. If teachers take care of these factors, their performance improves to the optimum level (Rao & Kumar, 2004). According to Sule (2013), to enhance teachers' job performance in secondary schools, QA practices should involve more robust strategies, which may include classroom visitation and inspection, evaluation of teachers' lesson notes, conferencing strategy, inspection of teachers' records, and administrative workshop strategy.

The key function of Quality Assurance is to stimulate changes and improvement of teaching and learning processes in education institutions. QA acts as a bridge between schools and the government. According to Gurudev (2022), the roles and importance of quality assurance are to fulfil mission and vision in secondary education, to ensure transparent aims and processes, achievement of standards, focus on continuous improvement and implementation of unique methodologies. Also included are integration and relevance of Information and Communication Technology and emphasis on the overall development of students.

According to Fischer (2011), the conception of supervision in the quality assurance process encompasses all efforts of educational officials intended to provide leadership to teachers, and it takes into account educational objectives, instructional materials, methodologies and evaluation of instruction. It is a two-way traffic in the sense that the supervisor and supervisee inform each other about school and teacher evaluation and give each other advice, assistance and feedback (Kallen, 1997). The research conducted by South Africa's Centre for Development and Enterprise (2015) identified effective teachers as the most critical factor in determining students' achievement in community secondary schools. Given the importance of high-quality teaching, there has been a focus on teacher evaluation as a process to measure and improve teachers' effectiveness in teaching by strengthening their accountability and supporting their professional development.

Many studies have been conducted to link quality assurance with other variables such as students and pupils' academic achievement, teachers' job performance, and work morale and motivation (Lupimo, 2014; Haule, 2012; Kasanda, 2015; Mmbando, 2010). However, there is little information on the perspectives of teachers and quality assurers on the quality assurance practices in community secondary schools, especially in Wanging'ombe District, Tanzania. The present study addresses this gap. It asks the questions; what are the views of teachers and QAs on the relevance of quality assurance practices in community secondary schools in Wanging'ombe District? What is the role of QAs in improving the teaching and learning environment in

community secondary schools? And, what are the challenges of QA practices in community secondary schools?

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the total quality management (TQM) philosophy. TQM is a philosophy of continuous improvement that provides a set of practical tools and techniques to meet the current and future needs, wants, and expectations of any educational institution (Sallies, 2014). It is an approach that has the potential to facilitate evolution in an educational system, leading to improvement in productivity and efficiency. This model is applicable in both education and other fields because it addresses the quality of people. TQM is important in all school activities and in school administration, for improving the quality of leadership and teachers' response to goals in order to maximize the quality of the output (Kerzner, 2006)

Quality assessment is necessary for continuous improvement of the education process, and improvement should be both internal and external to ensure proper functioning of the educational system. Internal quality improvement makes the teaching and learning process simple for teachers and students. An organization meets this requirement when it empowers every employee in all its departments to maintain high standards and strive for continuous improvement (Justine, 2011). External school quality improvement refers to initiatives led by organizations or professionals outside the school aimed at improving educational quality through evaluation, guidance, and support. According to UNESCO (2018), such interventions are designed not only to measure school performance but also to provide strategic direction for improvement. Improved school performance is the most critical issue in any educational organization. External quality assurance is done by the department of quality assurance in the Ministry of Education. TQM is quite a suitable model to opt for when seeking both internal and external quality assurance. The present study used the model to assess the effectiveness of quality assurance practices in Wanging'ombe District, to identify specific areas of school quality assurance that contribute to improved performance in community secondary schools, to explore how school quality assurance leads to improvement of pedagogical practices and to understand the challenges constraining quality assurance practices in community secondary schools in Wanging'ombe District in Tanzania.

4.0 Methods

This study employed a mixed approach to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data for the purpose of triangulating the findings to ensure validity. The quantitative component of the study measured and analysed numerical data on the frequency of school visits by QAs to community secondary schools and aspects that are highly considered during school. The qualitative component pertained to the impact of school quality assurance on school performance from the perspectives of QAs and heads of school. The authors employed a descriptive research design in which a cross-sectional survey was used to obtain data from research participants, school quality assurers, school heads, and teachers. The descriptive research design was chosen to help the researchers gain a better understanding of the impact of school quality assurance on school performance.

The study was conducted in Wanging'ombe District in Njombe Region, southern Tanzania. This district was chosen because it is one of the new administrative districts in the region, and it is located in a semi-remote area, and thus, a likely candidate for managerial and administrative challenges. The study aimed at coming up with new insights that may be useful in improving education quality in community secondary schools found in the peripheral zones of the country. The district has 21 elementary secondary schools, of which 18 are public and 3 are private. The community public secondary schools were the only target of the present study, six of which were involved in the study. The target population of the study comprised three categories of respondents: school quality assurers, heads of school and teachers. The total sample size for this study was 98 respondents, including two (2) quality assurers, six (6) school heads and 90 teachers.

The study employed purposive sampling to select quality assurers and heads of schools. However, the schools and teachers were selected using simple random sampling to give them an equal chance of being included in the sample. The researchers used the manual lottery method whereby, they wrote the names of all community public secondary schools on pieces of paper, put the written pieces of paper in a box, mixed them thoroughly and then picked only six of them. We applied the same method in selecting teachers to be included in the study sample; wrote on pieces of paper a statement that either invited or disallowed the teacher to participate in the study. Then, the pieces of paper were put in one box and mixed and the teachers were asked to pick one each. Those who picked the pieces with a statement inviting them to participate in the study were included in the study sample irrespective of their gender, subject specialization and work

experience. The study employed interviews and questionnaires to collect primary data from the respondents. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected through documentary review, which involved logbooks, lesson plans, teaching aids and notes, warning letters and appraisal forms. The secondary data was used as the basis for discussion of the impact of QA on school performance.

Qualitative data was subjected to content analysis. In the first step, the data gathered from interviews and documentary reviews was transcribed. In the second step, the data was categorized into subthemes according to the study objectives to obtain general implications. In the third step, data was coded and presented under each theme in a narrative form. The quantitative data was cleaned and analysed to generate frequencies, percentages and means using the SPSS computer software. Finally, the data was collated and presented in frequency tables.

5.0 Results and Discussion

Results on the Quality Assurance practices in community secondary schools were presented in themes including demographic features, relevance of school QA in community secondary schools, areas of QA focus, and role of QA in improving quality assurance practices in community secondary schools in Wanging'ombe District. Variables such as gender, level of education and work experience were perceived to have implications for the QA process in community secondary schools in Wanging'ombe District. The variables were subjected to descriptive analysis to produce frequencies and percentages for easy interpretation.

5.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Findings on demographic characteristics of the respondents are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information (N=98)

Work Experience (yrs)	Frequency and percentage of		Respondents
	QAs	Heads of school	Teachers
1 – 5	0 (0.0)	0(0.0%)	25(27.17%)
6 – 10	0 (0.0)	1 (16.6%)	33(35.86%)
11 – 15	1 (50%)	2(33.3%)	11(11.95%)
16 – 20	0(0.0%.)	2(33.3%)	8(8.69%)
21 – 25	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	6(6.52%)
26 – 30	0(0.0%)	1(16.6%)	5(5.43%)
Gender			

Male	2 (100%)	4 (66.66%)	66 (71.7%)
Female	0 (0.0%)	2 (33.33%)	24 (28.3%)
Education			
Diploma	0(0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10(13.04%)
Bachelor	0 (0.0%)	5 (83.3%)	80 (86.95%)
Postgraduate	2 (100%)	1 (16.6%)	00 (0.0%)

Results in Table 1 suggest that all respondents (100%) were above 18 years ensuring that their views, perceptions and awareness about the topic were genuine. The distribution of the respondents by gender was 64% male, and 36% female. The findings indicated that 66 (71.7%) of the teacher participants were male while 24 (28.3%) were female. Despite this gender disparity, the findings show that gender does not affect QA practices in community secondary schools. The findings show that heads of school, quality assurers and teachers were familiar with the practices in their workstations due to their long working experience. This condition was supposed to enhance QA practices since all QAs had postgraduate education, while most of the teachers had bachelor's degrees. These levels of education can contribute to improving QA practices and consequent students' academic achievement in community secondary schools.

5.2 Frequency of Quality Assurance Practices in Community Secondary Schools

Regarding the relevance of quality assurance practices in community secondary schools, the findings from interviews indicated that QA practice is relevant although it was poorly conducted in the district due to low frequency and small coverage of the area per year. During interviews, one of the QAs revealed that "... school quality assurance is my responsibility, but it is difficult to conduct the exercise in each school due to limited resources, although school performance is highly dependent on frequent school visits." (QA 1, August 2021). This implies that QAs have good knowledge of their duties and responsibilities, but they fail to practice QA exercises regularly due to several limitations, such as the wide scope of their work coverage, inadequate staffing and financial constraints. A similar observation was made by another quality assurer, who reported that teachers improve their skills and relevance of the practices after every single QA visit. He also pointed out that it improves teaching and learning and consequently students' academic performance. However, quality assurers conduct the QA exercise only in a few schools that they randomly select. According to a participating quality assurer,

. . .schools that are normally visited are those that are close to the centre of the district, while those located in remote and rural areas are left unevaluated. This practice is connected to low QA practices in community secondary schools. (QA 2, August 2021).

The findings are in line with (Diocles, 2020) who found that community secondary schools are perceived as low-performing, less equipped and hard-to-reach schools that do not offer quality education. This implies that extensive QA practice covers all of the areas which are stated in the QA framework (URT, 2014).

Meanwhile, heads of school expressed a great concern over the low frequency of school visits in community secondary schools. They suggested that a different approach should be devised to improve school quality assurance practices. They argued that because there are very few QAs in the district, they cannot offer necessary services of completing more than a single circle of visits to such schools. One of them said,

. . .there is a major challenge of the scope of QA given their limited number and resources. If we speak about zonal QA, they are responsible for assuring quality in secondary schools in the whole southern highland zone; they visit schools once in three years. At the district level, QAs visit schools at least twice a year. In most cases, they visit schools in January during the registration of form one students. This practice contributes to teachers' laziness and poor commitment, which trickle down to students' poor academic performance. (Head of secondary school 4, August 2021).

The following (Table 2) are results from a questionnaire administered to 90 teachers to check the consistency of the participants' responses on the frequency of visits made by QAs to community secondary schools (CSS) in the district.

Table 2: Teachers' response on frequency of QA visits to CSS (N=90)

Teachers' responses	Frequently conducted	Conducted	Not sure	Not conducted	Total
N	10	48	2	30	90
%	10.86	52.17	2.2	34.41	100.0

Source: Field data 2021

The findings revealed that cumulatively, more than 58 (65%) of the teachers acknowledged that QAs visit community secondary schools, while 30 (13.04%) indicated that no QA visit was paid to their schools. They imply that QA is less practiced in Wanging'ombe District, which is likely to culminate in poor academic performance among students and in an a school environment that is less than optimum .

To address the shortage of QAs in the study area, some heads of school suggested that the government should formulate a policy that allows ward education officers to help QAs to ensure effective quality assurance in community secondary schools. Accordingly, the formulation of such a policy should be accompanied by the establishment of a training framework for equipping WEOs with QA skills. Regarding this, one of the heads of school said: “it will reduce the burden of the QA department by serving cost and time”. (Head of school 4, August 2021).

5.3 Role of Quality Assurance in Community Secondary Schools

In revealing the role and challenges of school quality assurance practices, the findings from quality assurers indicated that their main task is to evaluate teachers' activeness in preparing schemes of work, lesson plans and teaching notes. Additionally, the QAs said that they physically observed the teaching process in the class and guided teachers on how to improve their teaching techniques. The QAs reported that most of the teachers tended to be active in fulfilling their work duties in the presence of QAs. One QA stated,

We observe the teaching process before entering the class as well as during the classroom interactions. We also give them advice on the appropriate teaching methods to improve teaching and learning practices. (QA 2, August 2021).

Heads of secondary schools equally affirmed the role of QA in improving teaching and learning practices. One of them stated,

. . . on coming to a specific school, QAs practices help to stimulate teachers' innovative behaviour through the discussions they conduct with subject teachers and heads of different academic departments. Therefore, teachers' minds get aroused to participate in achieving the school objectives and improve school performance. (Head of secondary school 3, August 2021).

These findings are similar to those reported by Ololube (2014), who pointed out that quality is the most vital component for teacher productivity and quality control in education institutions at different levels. Additionally, the findings are consistent with the disagreement by Alkutich (2015) and Matete (2009) that QA helps teachers improve their teaching and learning practices. Similarly, they corroborate the findings by Jehangir (2014), who argues that QA practices are highly affected by motivation of both teachers and quality assurers. Although this argument contradicts with the argument on the relevance of QA practices, in the real sense, QA motivates teachers to do their job better. This is also in line with Kambuga and Dadi (2015) and Manase & Dadi (2017), who established that school quality assurance is a motor for improving education quality.

5.4. Aspects of Quality Assurance Practices

Based on areas of focus in quality assurance practices, quality assurers revealed that the checklists they use during their school visits focus on such areas as availability of teaching and learning materials, for example, the current syllabus, textbooks, schemes of work, lesson plans, teaching notices, logbooks and lesson notes. One of them said that they usually start quality assurance exercises in the school head's office, where they review all important documents, such as teachers' report books, teachers' responsibilities, and teachers' and students' minutes. When they meet teachers, they discuss how to properly prepare lesson notices, lesson plans and schemes of work. One of the QAs pointed out that: "during this period of school QA practice, teachers become active and committed to their responsibilities" (QA 2, August 2021). These findings bear similarity with those of (Kotirde & Yunos, 2014; Mohammed, 2015), who emphasize reinforcement of policy in improving quality assurance practices that cover time management, examination setting, co-curricular activities, scheme of work, record keeping and students' academic records.

The perspectives of school heads revealed that most QA practices were done in a rush, as the time frame is usually limited. Consequently, quality assurers do not have enough time to scrutinize detailed information. Much of their focus, thus, tends to be on teaching and learning practices in few classroom sessions. This denies them the chances to understand the strengths and weaknesses of QA practices in community secondary schools. One of the school heads reported that:

...the focus of QAs is mostly concentrated on teaching and learning issues, leaving school infrastructures such as buildings and their accessories, administrative and management issues unassured. (Head, secondary school 6: August 2021).

These findings of rushed and less thorough assessment cannot fulfil the stipulates of KHDA (2015), which emphasises students' attainment, personal and social development, teaching and assessment, curriculum and educational needs of students, student protection and support, school leadership and management, and overall school performance. This implies that while the frequency of QA practices in community secondary schools is unsatisfactory, the QA exercise is less intensive, as quality assurers tend to focus only on the few items indicated in their checklists. Based on this observation, QA in the study area may have a weak impact on students' academic performance. Thus, the practice needs to be re-adjusted to keep up with the objectives of the school quality assurance policy. Results from teachers' responses revealed the same perspectives. These were based on teachers' time management, examination setting, co-curricular programmes, and schemes of work, record keeping and students' academic reports. However, literature offers very little analysis of the aspect of time management, although it was mentioned by respondents in this study. The results disagree with Ehren, Gustafsson, Altrichter, Skedsmo, Kemethofer & Huber (2015), whose findings indicated that quality assurance concentrates on a few specific subjects such as General Studies, Mathematics, and reading and writing. If only these were the aspects of focus of QA practice, it would generate a syndrome of poor academic performance among community secondary school students.

Regarding the way quality assurance is currently practiced in community secondary schools, quality assurers mentioned different barriers that affect their performance, ranging from insufficient human resources to physical infrastructure, e.g., lack of transport facilities to reach community schools and limited budget allocation within the department. One of the QAs said, "... there is a big problem in evaluating science teachers due to lack of lab equipment, workshops and seminars for them" (QA2, August 2021).

Heads of community secondary schools also had similar sentiments to those mentioned by school quality assurers. They said that QA is a big department, but it does not have reliable transport facilities to enable quality assurers easily reach rural schools. At the district level, it was revealed that the QA department does not have even a single motorcycle or bicycle. Heads of school also reported similar challenges to those mentioned by QA departments at the district and zonal levels. Additionally, they reported that there is a dire shortage of teaching and learning materials and infrastructures in remote schools, especially for science subjects such as science and

geography laboratories, as one of the requirements for relevant and meaningful QA practices. The findings are similar to those reported by Kambuga & Dadi (2015), who revealed that the planning of school quality assurance practices in place does not prioritise issues of poor academic progress in rural community secondary schools and the quality of tests/examinations prepared by teachers there. While the 2023 report of Tanzania's National Audit office recorded improvement in school visits especially to those located in urban areas, it noted that rural schools continued to suffer from infrequent visits. The Office also reported that the insufficiency of resources such as offices, housing, transport facilities and human resources culminates in difficulty in assuring education quality in rural community secondary schools.

6.0 Conclusion

It has been found that quality assurance practices in secondary schools are a motor for improving both teaching and learning as well as students' academic performance. In this study, demographic factors such as gender, age and levels of education have been found to build a baseline for relevance of the study. Also, teachers and quality assurers had similar views that QA practices in Tanzania's rural community secondary schools are relevant although they have been implemented to unsatisfactory level. Moreover, it was revealed that quality assurance practices play vital roles in improving educational quality as they evaluate teaching and learning strategies, co-curricular activities, students' academic reports, schemes work, time management and examination settings. Rural community secondary schools are thought to be characterized by poor infrastructure, poor academic achievements as well as understaffing. QAs also evaluate other aspects such as school environment and school administration and management portfolios. Unfortunately, the QA department is beset by a host of challenges, such as insufficiency of financial resources and understaffing as compared to the number of schools to be covered, and lack of transport facilities required to make frequent visits to rural schools.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the reported findings, some recommendations are worth making. Firstly, it is recommended that adequate human resources in the QA department be made available to ensure effective quality assurance practices. Secondly, rural community secondary schools must be equipped with adequate teaching and learning materials (including laboratory equipment) to facilitate meaningful quality assurance practices. Thirdly, quality assurance practices in

community rural secondary schools need to be holistic in order to ensure that every aspect of the school is evaluated as indicated in the QA assessment tool kit so as to align with the TQM model. Fourthly, a policy that mandates ward educational officers (WEO) to assist the quality assurance department should be formulated. This should be accompanied by capacity building to equip ward educational officers with QA skills to bridge the gap caused by the inadequacy of quality assurers.

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9.0 Declaration of interest statement

Authors have in any circumstances no conflict of interest of any kind in respect of this manuscript.

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