

Challenges Facing School Quality Assurance Officers in implementing School Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools in Bunda Town Council

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KEYWORDS: School quality assuranceABSTRACT: This study explored the challenges facing the implementation of practices, challenges, and public secondaryschool quality assurance (SQA) practices in public secondary schools in Bunda schools

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Town Council, Tanzania. A qualitative approach with a multiple case study design was employed to gain in-depth insights. Using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, a sample of 25 participants was selected, including one District School Quality Assurance Officer, five headteachers, and 19 teachers from five schools. Data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, while ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were observed. Findings revealed major challenges, including limited financial support, inadequate professional development, negative attitudes among educators, heavy workloads, and weak community involvement. These challenges hinder the effectiveness of SQA in improving teaching and learning. The study recommends that the government increase resource allocation, enhance capacity building, and strengthen collaboration to improve school quality assurance (SQA) practices.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globally, school quality assurance (SQA) officers encounter several challenges in implementing effective practices in secondary schools. A study by Georgios et al. (2022) identified that the limited number of SQA officers leads to overwork and insufficient time to perform comprehensive evaluations, affecting the quality of their oversight. Additionally, a report by the European Commission (2023) highlighted that inadequate training and professional development opportunities for SQA officers hinder their ability to effectively assess and support teaching practices. Furthermore, a survey by the OECD (2021) found that resistance from teachers and school leaders to external evaluations and feedback can impede the successful implementation of SQA practices, as stakeholders may perceive them as intrusive or lacking relevance. These challenges underscore the need for strategic planning, adequate resource allocation, and fostering a collaborative culture to enhance the effectiveness of SQA officers in secondary education.

In Africa, school quality assurance (SQA) officers face numerous challenges in implementing quality assurance practices in secondary schools. In Kenya, Waweru and Muola (2020) reported that inspectors struggle with large workloads, limited logistical support, and insufficient transport, making regular school visits difficult. In Nigeria, Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2019) highlighted issues such as underfunding, inadequate training, and resistance from school staff, which hinder effective supervision and monitoring. In South Africa, Mahlangu (2018) found that while SQA frameworks exist, inconsistent follow-ups, limited professional development, and heavy administrative demands reduce the effectiveness of quality assurance processes. Across these contexts, systemic challenges, resource constraints, and resistance from school personnel significantly limit SQA officers' ability to enforce standards, provide guidance, and improve educational outcomes. Strengthening capacity, resources, and collaboration is therefore critical to enhancing school quality assurance in African secondary schools.

In Tanzania, school quality assurance (SQA) officers face significant challenges in implementing effective practices in secondary schools. A study by Kosia and Okendo (2018) in Arusha City identified issues such as inadequate facilities, teachers' reluctance to accept recommendations, lack of training, and limited time, which hinder the effectiveness of SQA activities. Similarly, research by Medard and Mwila (2022) in Temeke Municipality highlighted challenges including shortage of funds, staff, and working facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of transport and materials for SQA officers, making it difficult to implement guidelines effectively. Furthermore, Nada (2022) reported that incompetent teachers, lack of resources, and insufficient implementation of recommendations impede the progress of SQA initiatives in improving educational quality. These studies underscore the need for addressing resource constraints, enhancing training, and fostering cooperation among stakeholders to strengthen the impact of SQA practices in Tanzanian secondary schools. The quality of education in Bunda Town Council has been reported as suboptimal, with challenges such as low teacher performance, limited teaching resources, and poor student outcomes. Many schools struggle to maintain effective instructional practices, while supervision and support mechanisms remain weak. These issues undermine pupils' learning achievements and overall school performance. To address these concerns, this study was set to examine the school quality assurance practices implemented in public primary schools, aiming to understand how they can enhance teacher job performance and improve educational quality.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theory Underpinning the Study

This study was underpinned by Total Quality Management Theory developed by Edwards Deming in 1970s to explore the challenges facing schools' quality assurance officers in implementing school quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council. Total Quality Management (TQM) theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the challenges facing implementation of school quality assurance practices in secondary schools. Its main tenets include continuous improvement, which emphasizes the ongoing evaluation and enhancement of processes to achieve higher performance standards (Oakland, 2014). For SQA officers, this entails regularly reviewing inspection methods, feedback systems, and professional development strategies to improve school outcomes. Stakeholder focus highlights the need to engage teachers, headteachers, and students, ensuring that quality assurance practices are collaborative and accepted. Systematic processes require structured and standardized procedures in monitoring and evaluation activities, reducing inconsistencies. Teamwork and collaboration stress the importance of joint efforts between SQA officers and school staff to address challenges effectively. Finally, data-driven decision making encourages evidence-based interventions, allowing officers to target specific areas for improvement. Together, these tenets guide SQA officers in overcoming resource constraints, resistance, and logistical challenges, ensuring effective implementation of quality assurance practices (Talib et al., 2019).

The relevance of Total Quality Management (TQM) theory to this study lies in its emphasis on continuous improvement, systematic evaluation, and stakeholder involvement to achieve high-quality outcomes. In the context of challenges facing school quality assurance (SQA) officers in secondary schools, TQM provides a framework for understanding how structured processes, collaboration, and accountability can enhance the effectiveness of SQA practices. By promoting teamwork, regular monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and professional development, TQM highlights strategies that can help overcome resource constraints, resistance from staff, and other implementation challenges. Applying TQM in this study underscores the importance of quality-focused, participatory, and systematic approaches in enabling SQA officers to improve teaching standards and overall school performance.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which is appropriate for exploring participants' views and experiences in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, a multiple case study design was used to capture varied perspectives across different schools, allowing comparison and deeper understanding of challenges facing the implementation of school quality assurance practices (Yin, 2018).

The study utilized purposive sampling to deliberately select participants with direct knowledge of school quality assurance, including the District School Quality Assurance Officer, headteachers, and teachers. In addition, convenience sampling was applied to access participants who were available and willing to participate within the given timeframe (Etikan et al., 2016). A total sample of 25 participants was selected, comprising one School Quality Assurance Officer, five headteachers, and 19 teachers from five public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council.

To ensure trustworthiness of this study, the four criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement and triangulation of data from interviews and focus group discussions. Transferability was enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the study context, enabling readers to determine applicability to other settings. Dependability was ensured by maintaining clear records of data collection and analysis procedures for auditing. Confirmability was addressed by minimizing researcher bias through reflexivity and supporting interpretations with direct quotes.

Regarding ethical considerations, the study adhered to research ethics guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms in reporting. Furthermore, approval from relevant education authorities was sought prior to fieldwork. These measures ensured participants' rights and dignity were protected throughout the research process (Bryman, 2016).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study on challenges facing the implementation of school quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council. The results were obtained through interviews with the School Quality Assurance Officer, headteachers, and focus group discussions with teachers.

4.2 Challenges Facing the Implementation of School Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools in Bunda Town Council

This section examines the challenges hindering the implementation of school quality assurance (SQA) practices in public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council. Data were collected through interviews with the School Quality Assurance Officer and headteachers, and focus group discussions with teachers, ensuring multiple perspectives. Key findings reveal that limited financial and logistical support, inadequate professional development, negative attitudes from educators, heavy workloads, and weak community involvement are the main barriers, affecting the effectiveness of inspections and the overall quality of teaching and learning.

4.2.1 Limited Financial and Logistical Support

The findings from both interview schedules and focus group discussion with heads of schools, school quality assurance officer and teachers revealed that limited financial and logistical support hinder the implementation of school quality assurance practices in secondary schools. When SQAQ asked had this to say

We struggle with transport and allowances; reaching distant schools is difficult. Without reliable vehicles and adequate budgets, visits are irregular. This situation undermines our ability to monitor standards consistently and provide meaningful support for schools, especially those located in remote villages (Interview with SQAQ 7th May 2025).

Similarly, when heads of school from school C asked had this to say

Sometimes officers plan visits but fail to come because of transport shortages. This leaves schools without supervision for long periods. The irregularity of these visits' limits guidance for teachers, and in the end, students remain affected by persistent learning challenges (Interview with HoS3, 7th May 2025)

During Focus group discussion, one of the group coded FGD2 commented

We rarely see quality assurance officers in our school, mainly because they cannot afford to travel regularly. Their absence denies us the feedback we need to improve our teaching practices. Many times, we rely only on personal efforts for improvement (FGDs2 8th May 2025).

The quotes imply that inadequate funding and poor logistics hinder quality assurance officers' ability to conduct regular visits. This leads to inconsistent monitoring, leaving schools without necessary guidance. Consequently, teachers and students miss opportunities for timely support, which negatively affects teaching standards, infrastructure development, and overall academic performance. Without improved resource allocation, school quality assurance remains superficial and fails to drive sustainable educational improvement. Inadequate funding and transport hinder routine quality assurance visits, leaving many schools unsupervised. This reduces accountability, weakens curriculum implementation, and perpetuates inequalities between urban and rural schools. Mfaume and Bilinga (2017) found that insufficient resources restricted inspectors from reaching remote schools, limiting their effectiveness. Similarly, Lyimo (2014) reported that lack of transport and allowances reduced inspection frequency in Tanzanian community secondary schools. From a TQM perspective, Deming emphasized that quality improvement relies on system design supported by adequate resources. The PDCA cycle cannot function when the "Do" and "Check" phases are irregular due to logistical barriers. Thus, resourcing inspections ensures that quality assurance becomes a reliable, iterative process, fostering school improvement.

4.2.2 Shortage of Staff and Heavy Workload

Interviews with headteachers and the School Quality Assurance Officer, along with focus group discussions with teachers, revealed that shortages of staff and heavy workloads is a major challenge hindering the implementation of school quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council. When participants of this study asked, SQAQ had this to say

Our team is very small compared to the large number of schools we must cover. Sometimes a single officer supervises more than 50 schools, making it impossible to conduct regular visits. This heavy workload reduces the quality and depth of inspections (Interview with SQA0 7th May 2025)

One of the heads of school when asked had this to say

Inspections are rare because officers are few and overstretched. When they visit, they often spend only a short time and leave quickly, so their feedback is too general. Schools continue to face challenges because issues remain unsolved after inspections (Interview with HoS2, 7th May 2025)

Additionally, one of the focus group discussion coded FGD4 ascertained that;

We wish officers visited more often, but there are simply too few of them. Teachers need regular guidance, yet months or even years pass without any contact. This shortage makes quality assurance more like a formality than a continuous support (FGD4 8th May, 2025)

The quotes reveal that the scarcity of officers creates an overwhelming workload, resulting in rare and shallow inspections. Limited human resources mean that many schools remain unsupervised for long periods, and feedback provided lacks depth. This reduces the credibility and effectiveness of the quality assurance system. Without adequate staffing, the purpose of improving teaching and learning practices is undermined, perpetuating weaknesses in public secondary schools. A shortage of qualified school quality assurance officers' results in infrequent and superficial inspections. With too few officers serving many schools, inspections are rushed and feedback lacks depth. Mosha (2006) noted that understaffing constrained education supervision, leaving gaps in school support. Likewise, The Citizen (2024) reported that in Tanzania, only 14% of schools were inspected annually due to staff shortages. TQM theory supports these findings by stressing that processes must be matched with adequate human capacity for quality to be sustained. Deming's principle of optimizing systems implies that an overstretched workforce reduces process reliability. Therefore, recruiting more officers and balancing workloads is essential for maintaining continuous improvement in schools.

4.2.3 Inadequate Professional Development

Interviews with headteachers and the School Quality Assurance Officer, along with focus group discussions with teachers, revealed that inadequate professional development is a major challenge hindering the implementation of school quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council. This means that school quality assurance officers in Bunda Town Council lack adequate training and continuous professional development opportunities to update their knowledge and skills. As a result, their ability to provide relevant guidance and support to teachers is limited, reducing the effectiveness of inspections. Without updated expertise, quality assurance practices risk becoming compliance-driven rather than developmental, weakening efforts to improve teaching, learning, and overall school performance. For example, when school quality assurance officer asked had this to say

We also need continuous training. Some officers are not well-updated with curriculum reforms or modern teaching methods. Without capacity building, it is hard to guide teachers effectively, and sometimes our advice seems outdated instead of helping schools improve teaching practices (Interview with SQA0 7th May, 2025)

Another head of school had this to say

A few officers still emphasize old approaches, which do not match with the competence-based curriculum. This weakens their credibility and reduces teachers' willingness to accept feedback. For schools to benefit, officers must also receive frequent training and updated knowledge (HoS5 7th May, 2025)

Additionally, one of FGD commented

At times, officers advise us on methods no longer emphasized in current curriculum guidelines. This shows they lack refresher training. Teachers feel discouraged when support does not reflect modern pedagogy. We need inspectors who are fully informed about today's practices (FGD3 8th May, 2025)

The quotes suggest that insufficient training weakens officers' ability to guide schools effectively. When officers provide outdated recommendations, teachers lose trust and hesitate to adopt suggested practices. This undermines curriculum implementation, especially competence-based approaches. Without continuous professional development, quality assurance officers risk becoming irrelevant, and schools miss critical support needed to enhance pedagogical skills, which in turn limits student-centered learning and quality outcomes in secondary education. Without continuous training, quality assurance officers lack updated knowledge of new curricula and pedagogy, reducing their credibility. Mfaume and Bilinga (2017) revealed that limited in-service training weakened inspectors' ability to provide constructive guidance. Similarly, Uwazi (2010) highlighted that inspectors often relied on outdated practices, limiting the developmental role of inspections. According to TQM, continuous staff training is central to

ensuring system quality. Deming emphasized that competent, well-trained staff are necessary for effective “Check” and “Act” phases in the PDCA cycle. Thus, regular professional development equips officers with modern skills, improves trust with teachers, and ensures inspections foster continuous improvement

4.2.4 Negative Attitudes from Teachers and Heads of Schools

Interview schedules conducted with SQAQO and heads of schools revealed that negative attitudes from teachers and heads of schools are the main factors that hinder the implementation of SQA practices in public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council. This means that many teachers and heads of schools in Bunda Town Council perceive school quality assurance practices as fault-finding rather than supportive. Such negative attitudes create resistance, lack of openness, and superficial preparation during inspections. As a result, genuine challenges remain hidden, limiting constructive dialogue and professional growth. Consequently, the intended purpose of quality assurance to enhance teaching, learning, and accountability is undermined, weakening the overall effectiveness of school improvement initiatives. For instance, when participant of this study asked, SQAQO had this to say

Many teachers see us as fault-finders rather than supporters. This perception makes cooperation difficult during visits. Instead of openly showing challenges, teachers sometimes hide weaknesses, which prevents us from giving relevant recommendations to improve teaching and student learning outcomes (Interview with SQAQO 7th May, 2025)

Similarly, one of the head of school when asked commented that;

Teachers here fear inspections because they feel blamed instead of supported. This mindset creates tension. During visits, teachers prepare artificial lessons to impress officers, but these do not reflect reality. As a result, the process misses the real classroom picture (Interview with HoS1 7th May 2025)

Furthermore, one of the FGD when asked responded that;

We often feel quality assurance is more about exposing weaknesses than helping us grow. This makes teachers nervous and less open. If officers approached us as partners rather than critics, schools would benefit more from inspections and professional guidance (FGD2 8th May 2025)

The quotes indicate that teachers and heads often perceive quality assurance as punitive rather than supportive. This perception leads to resistance, artificial lesson preparations, and lack of openness during inspections. Such attitudes reduce the effectiveness of monitoring and make real challenges invisible. If not addressed, this mistrust between officers and educators undermines collaboration, preventing meaningful school improvement and professional growth among teachers in public secondary schools. Teachers often view inspections as punitive, leading to resistance and artificial lesson preparations. Adepoju and Akinola (2009) found that Nigerian teachers perceived inspections as judgmental, which reduced openness during evaluation. Similarly, Njeru and Orodho (2003) reported that Kenyan teachers showed resistance when inspectors adopted fault-finding approaches. TQM advocates for a blame-free culture where challenges are addressed collaboratively. Deming argued that improvement emerges when staff feel supported, not threatened. Applying this principle to school inspections means reframing them as supportive engagements, fostering trust and cooperation. This shift promotes genuine problem-solving, enhancing both teaching quality and accountability

4.2.5 Weak Implementation of Recommendations

Interview schedules with heads of schools and SQAQO and FGD with teachers revealed weak implementation of recommendation as one of the setbacks in implementing school quality assurance practices in public secondary schools. For instance, when SQAQO asked had this to say

We provide schools with detailed reports, but many recommendations are not acted upon. Authorities rarely allocate resources for implementation, so the same issues repeat in each inspection. This frustrates our efforts and makes us feel like our role is ineffective (Interview with SQAQO 7th May, 2025)

Additionally, when one of the heads of schools asked on the same statement had this to say

After every inspection, we receive good recommendations, but putting them into practice is difficult without financial and material support. Sometimes the district ignores requests for assistance, leaving us with reports on paper but no visible changes in the school (Semi-structured interview with HoS2, 7th May, 2025)

In the same vein, one of the focus group discussion coded FGDS3 commented;

Even when inspectors highlight issues, schools often lack resources to implement changes. For example, they may recommend more textbooks or laboratories, but nothing follows. This makes teachers feel the process does not bring real improvement to classroom teaching (FGDS3 8th May, 2025)

The quotes imply that recommendations from quality assurance officers are rarely implemented due to lack of follow-up and resources. This creates a cycle where the same issues recur in each inspection, frustrating both officers and schools. Without

strong accountability and resource support, inspection reports remain theoretical. Consequently, schools fail to improve, and the intended role of quality assurance in enhancing teaching and learning is greatly diminished. Many schools fail to implement inspectors' recommendations due to lack of resources and weak follow-up. Mfaume and Bilinga (2017) observed that most inspection reports in Tanzania were shelved without action. Similarly, Uwazi (2010) noted that the absence of monitoring mechanisms limited the translation of recommendations into practice. TQM theory underscores the importance of completing the PDCA cycle recommendations ("Plan" and "Check") must be followed by implementation ("Do") and review ("Act"). Without this, quality systems stagnate. Ensuring schools receive support, follow-up, and accountability mechanisms aligns with TQM principles, leading to sustained school improvement.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study concludes that the implementation of school quality assurance (SQA) practices in public secondary schools in Bunda Town Council faces significant barriers. The major challenges include limited financial and logistical support, inadequate professional development for officers, negative attitudes among teachers and headteachers, heavy workloads, and weak community involvement. These factors collectively undermine the effectiveness of SQA in enhancing teaching, learning, and accountability. Without adequate resources, supportive attitudes, and collaborative engagement, quality assurance risks becoming compliance-oriented rather than developmental, limiting its potential to foster continuous improvement in the education system.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that the government increase financial and logistical support for school quality assurance officers to ensure equitable inspections across all schools. Continuous professional development programs should be strengthened to build officers' and teachers' capacities. Awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement are necessary to change negative attitudes toward SQA, promoting it as developmental rather than fault-finding. Workload reduction strategies, including recruiting more staff, can enable effective participation in quality assurance. Finally, active community involvement should be encouraged to provide material, moral, and financial support, ensuring SQA practices become collaborative and sustainable for improved school performance.

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