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The Impact of Internal School Quality Assurance Practices on Ensuring Quality Education in Secondary Schools in Misungwi District –Tanzania

Gerlard Kija*, Saul Mpeshe and Neema Chaula
Department of Education
University of Iringa, P.O Box 200, Iringa, Tanzania
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ABSTRACT

Ensuring quality education remains a critical challenge across many developing countries, including Tanzania, where disparities in resources and educational management often undermine student achievement. This study investigated the impact of Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) practices on the quality of education in Tanzanian secondary schools, focusing on Misungwi District in Mwanza Region. Unlike many studies that only describe the frequency of ISQA practices, this research sought to establish how these practices actually influence teaching, learning, and school improvement. Guided by behaviourism and constructivism theories, the study employed a quantitative descriptive design with a sample of 63 respondents, including heads of schools, academic teachers, teachers, and school quality assurance committee members. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires and analysed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The results indicated that ISQA practices do have a significant impact on quality education. Monitoring and evaluation emerged as the most influential domains, particularly in enhancing accountability, tracking student progress, and shaping evidence-based decisions. Planning and assessment, though impactful in theory, were less effective in practice due to inadequate resources, weak institutional support, and an overreliance on summative examinations. The study concludes that ISQA has transformative potential when fully implemented, but its benefits are unevenly distributed across domains. Strengthening planning and assessment, alongside the already institutionalized monitoring and evaluation, is necessary to ensure that ISQA not only measures compliance but also drives continuous improvement.

*Corresponding author's e-mail address: geraldkissa@gmail.com (Kija, G.)

1.0 Introduction

The pursuit of quality education has gained unprecedented global importance, particularly under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which emphasises inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. For education systems to respond to these aspirations, countries must establish robust mechanisms that not only track progress but also foster genuine improvement in teaching and learning. One such mechanism is Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA), which places schools at the centre of evaluating and improving their own practices.

In Tanzania, ISQA was introduced as part of wider educational reforms aimed at decentralising accountability and strengthening institutional responsibility. The expectation was that ISQA would empower schools to conduct self-assessments, monitor student learning, and design actionable plans for improvement. However, while these reforms introduced structures and committees to oversee ISQA, the actual impact on the ground remains contested. Some studies highlight that monitoring and evaluation have contributed positively to teaching effectiveness, while others argue that planning and assessment are inconsistently applied, leaving gaps in sustainable quality improvement.

This study was motivated by the recognition that, although schools across Tanzania have adopted ISQA practices, less is known about how these practices directly affect the quality of education delivered to students. By focusing on Misungwi District, a region that reflects both rural and semi-urban educational contexts, the study offers insights into how ISQA operates in environments characterised by limited resources and competing priorities. The central objective was to determine which ISQA domains – monitoring, evaluation, planning, or assessment – are most impactful in shaping quality education in secondary schools.

The impact of internal quality assurance on educational outcomes has attracted scholarly attention globally. In developed contexts, Anderson and Tomlinson (2021) found that structured teacher evaluation frameworks in the United States not only enhanced accountability but also improved instructional practices, leading to measurable gains in student performance. Similarly, Patel and Sharma (2020) reported in India that ISQA improved student engagement and teacher motivation, though rural areas lagged behind urban schools due to limited resources and teacher resistance to supervision.

Within Africa, studies present a nuanced picture. Koffi *et al.* (2023) in Benin established that internal school evaluations and curriculum reviews significantly improved academic achievement, particularly where leadership actively supported the process. In Botswana, Mokobela (2021) demonstrated that supervision improved teaching but noted that teachers often perceived ISQA as an external imposition rather than a tool for professional growth. In Kenya, Mwangi and Waweru (2022) found that ISQA practices were associated with improved outcomes in mathematics and science, largely due to the integration of regular classroom observations and feedback systems.

Tanzania presents both opportunities and challenges. Mwaikambo and Massawe (2022) showed that teacher appraisals and audits contributed to improved teaching effectiveness and accountability. However, Ng'hoboko and Mrema (2024) reported that internal quality assurance in primary schools was constrained by limited resources, lack of professional development, and weak planning mechanisms. These studies suggest that while ISQA has positive impacts, its effectiveness depends on adequate institutional support, leadership commitment, and the balanced application of its different domains. This research builds on these findings by focusing specifically on the impacts of ISQA in Tanzanian secondary schools.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Misungwi District in Mwanza Region, an area that combines both rural and semi-urban contexts and is representative of many of the challenges facing Tanzanian education. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed to capture the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. The population comprised heads of schools, academic teachers, classroom teachers, and members of ISQA committees, totalling 1,026 individuals. From this,

a purposive and stratified sample of 63 respondents was selected to ensure that all categories of stakeholders were represented.

Structured questionnaires were the primary tool for data collection, designed to capture respondents' views on the impact of monitoring, evaluation, planning, and assessment. Secondary data, including performance records and school reports, supplemented the primary data. Data were analysed using SPSS (v21), with PCA employed to identify underlying factors and measure the relative impact of each ISQA domain.

3.0 Results

3.1 Suitability of Data for PCA

Table 1

KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.771
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1282.444
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

Prior to factor extraction, the dataset was tested for adequacy. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy yielded a value of 0.771, which is above the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60, indicating that the sample was adequate for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant (χ^2 = 1282.444, df = 276, p < 0.001), demonstrating that correlations between variables were sufficiently strong to warrant the use of Principal Component Analysis (PCA). These results confirmed that the data were suitable for uncovering the underlying structure of Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) practices.

3.2 Total Variance Explained

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) identified three key dimensions of Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) practices with eigenvalues greater than 1, together explaining 72.546% of the variance, an acceptable level in social science research. The first component, accounting for 49.072% of the variance, represented monitoring and evaluation practices such as lesson observations, use of student performance data, assessment of learning outcomes, and application of feedback, highlighting their strong influence on school quality outcomes. The second component, explaining 13.438% of the variance, reflected planning practices, emphasising the role of quality improvement plans derived from monitoring and evaluation findings in guiding decisions. The third component, contributing 10.036% of the variance, related to assessment practices like reviewing student work and checking teaching materials, which remain vital for aligning efforts with school goals. Collectively, these components confirm that ISQA effectiveness relies on an integrated combination of monitoring, evaluation, planning, and assessment, validating the structure of the ISQA tool and demonstrating PCA's utility in identifying meaningful practice domains that influence education quality.

Table 2

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.884	54.421	54.421	9.814	49.072	49.072
2	2.569	12.846	67.267	2.688	13.438	62.510
3	1.056	5.279	72.546	2.007	10.036	72.546
4	.875	4.373	76.919			
5	.751	3.756	80.675			
6	.606	3.029	83.704			
7	.564	2.819	86.524			
8	.455	2.277	88.800			
9	.413	2.066	90.866			
10	.390	1.951	92.817			
11	.348	1.738	94.555			
12	.246	1.230	95.785			
13	.196	.982	96.768			
14	.170	.849	97.616			

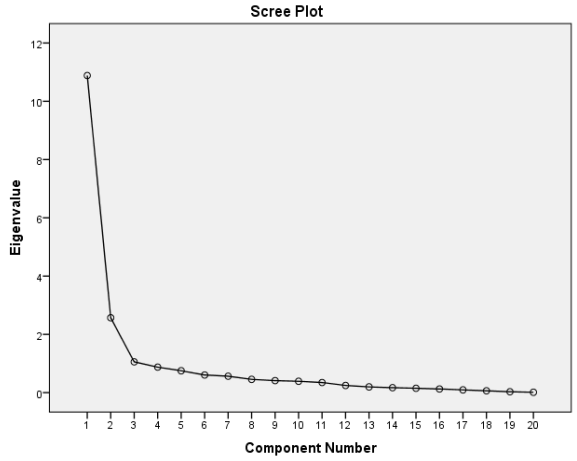
15	.149	.747	98.363
16	.126	.631	98.995
17	.094	.472	99.467
18	.064	.318	99.785
19	.030	.152	99.937
20	.013	.063	100.000

3.3 Scree Plot

The scree plot further supported the extraction of four components. The plot showed a distinct inflection point after the fourth component, confirming that only four factors should be retained for further analysis. This result is consistent with the theoretical model of ISQA, which is built around four key domains that collectively influence quality education.

Figure 1

Scree Plot of Principal Component



3.4 Rotated Component Matrix Results

Table 3

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component		
CODE	1	2	3
DM2	.899		
DM4	.873		
DA2	.872		
DP1	.867		
DM3	.862		
DA3	.838		
DA4	.828		
DA1	.816		
DA5	.806		
DP3	.805		
DM1	.791		
DP2	.780		
DP4	.778		
DM5	.755		
DE1		.891	
DE2		.778	
DP5		.777	
DE5			.784
DE4			.698
DE3			.608

To improve interpretability, the extracted factors were rotated using the Varimax method. The rotated component matrix showed strong loadings of items onto their respective domains. Monitoring and evaluation exhibited the highest factor loadings, reflecting their dominant roles in influencing quality education. Planning and assessment also recorded consistent but moderate loadings, suggesting that while these domains are relevant, their impacts are relatively weaker in practice compared to monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring emerged as the most influential ISQA domain, with items such as tracking student performance (0.899) and reviewing benchmarks (0.873) showing very high factor loadings. These practices enabled schools to identify weaknesses early and take corrective measures, thereby promoting accountability and improved academic outcomes. Evaluation followed closely, with high loadings such as evaluation of criteria (0.894) and evaluation of lesson notes (0.872). These results highlight the importance of evaluation in generating reliable feedback, ensuring accountability, and guiding evidence-based decision-making.

Planning practices displayed moderate but meaningful loadings, with the strongest being related to structured improvement plans (0.867). Although planning provides direction for school improvement and teacher professional development, its impact was limited by inconsistent implementation and lack of adequate resources. Assessment practices, while the least emphasised, still showed significant loadings, particularly in areas such as the use of student performance to encourage problem-solving (0.872). However, the overreliance on summative examinations and neglect of formative assessments reduced the potential impact of this domain on continuous learning and instructional improvement.

Taken together, the PCA results confirmed that ISQA has a positive impact on quality education

in Tanzanian secondary schools. However, the impacts were unevenly distributed across the four domains. Monitoring and evaluation emerged as the dominant and most effective practices, while planning and assessment, though essential, were comparatively weaker due to contextual limitations. This suggests that for ISQA to be fully effective, schools must reinforce planning and assessment to complement the already strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

4.0 Discussion

The study examined the impact of Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) practices on quality education in secondary schools, with Principal Component Analysis (PCA) identifying four domains-monitoring, evaluation, planning, and assessment that collectively explained 72.546% of the variance. Monitoring emerged as the most influential practice, especially through tracking student progress, reviewing performance data, and using findings to improve academic outcomes. These practices allowed schools to detect weaknesses and respond with targeted interventions such as remedial programmes or teacher mentoring. As noted by Macha and Warioba (2023), structured monitoring helps identify learning difficulties early, while Nyirenda (2024) reported that regular data reviews improve progression and reduce dropout rates. Longitudinal monitoring was also emphasised by Simbeye (2022), who highlighted its role in assessing the long-term impact of teaching trategies, and by Juma (2023), who argued that the cycle of monitoring, intervention, and review drives continuous institutional learning. Evaluation practices also proved highly significant, shifting from compliance checks to evidence-based management. Schools that embedded evaluation into decision-making used it to refine strategies and measure the effectiveness of interventions. Komba and Kapinga (2023) stressed that incorporating student voices enhances instructional responsiveness and accountability, while Laiser (2022) highlighted that systematic evaluation helps align resources with learner needs.

Planning and assessment, though less dominant, also contributed meaningfully to quality education. Planning provided schools with structured roadmaps, supporting academic improvement, co-curricular inclusion, and professional development. Massawe and Nuhu (2024) observed that strong planning allows schools to address curriculum gaps and meet diverse learner needs, while Sanga (2023) noted that planning fosters collaboration and efficient resource use. Moreover, Mkoma (2021), Mwinyi (2022), and Kileo (2023) each stressed that feedback-informed planning creates adaptability and responsiveness, moving schools away from rigid approaches. Assessment, though least emphasised, had transformative potential in guiding instruction, evaluating teaching quality, and promoting higher-order thinking. Mbawala (2023) confirmed that continuous assessment supports learner progress tracking, and Chambo (2022) showed that formative assessment enhances motivation and engagement. Despite these strengths, the study also found weaknesses such as neglecting lesson note reviews, which undermines coherence between planning and teaching, and an overreliance on summative examinations. Overall, the findings demonstrated that monitoring and evaluation dominated ISQA practices in Misungwi secondary schools, while planning and assessment remained underutilised yet essential for holistic and sustainable quality improvement.

5.0 Conclusion

This study set out to assess the impact of Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) practices on the quality of education in Tanzanian secondary schools, with a specific focus on Misungwi District. The findings confirm that ISQA is not merely an administrative requirement but a powerful framework capable of shaping educational outcomes when properly applied. Among the four domains examined, monitoring and evaluation emerged as the most impactful, driving improvements in accountability, instructional practices, and student performance. These domains ensured that teaching and learning were constantly checked against set benchmarks, allowing schools to identify weaknesses early and to respond with targeted interventions.

Planning and assessment, on the other hand, demonstrated more limited influence despite their theoretical importance. In practice, these domains were constrained by scarce resources, insufficient institutional support, and an overreliance on summative assessments. While teachers and administrators acknowledged their potential, planning often remained a paper exercise, and assessments were narrowly focused on examinations rather than on promoting continuous learning. This imbalance suggests that Tanzanian schools are benefiting from ISQA but not yet realising its full potential.

The broader implication of these findings is that ISQA has the capacity to significantly advance the goals of quality education envisioned in Sustainable Development Goal 4. When monitoring and evaluation are coupled with strong planning and formative assessment, schools can move beyond compliance-driven practices toward genuine cultures of learning and improvement. This aligns with international evidence that shows ISQA can empower schools to take ownership of quality, enhance teacher professionalism, and improve student engagement when implemented holistically.

Importantly, the study also underscores that ISQA in Tanzania is highly contextual. In regions such as Misungwi, where resources are limited and schools operate in both rural and semi-urban contexts, the impact of ISQA depends heavily on leadership commitment, teacher capacity, and institutional support. The unevenness in outcomes reflects broader structural challenges within the education system, suggesting that ISQA cannot operate effectively in isolation from broader reforms in funding, infrastructure, and teacher development.

Finally, while this study highlights the significant contributions of ISQA to quality education, it also opens avenues for further research. Future studies should explore the longitudinal impacts of ISQA on student outcomes, investigate its role in teacher motivation, and examine how digital tools can strengthen monitoring and assessment. By doing so, Tanzania and similar contexts can ensure that ISQA evolves into a dynamic process that not only safeguards quality but also drives sustainable educational transformation.

6.0 Recommendations

To improve the effectiveness of Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) in Tanzanian secondary schools, it is crucial to strengthen assessment by institutionalising structured practices such as lesson plan reviews, classroom observations, and student feedback systems so that assessments move beyond summative grading and instead become formative tools that continuously guide teaching and learning. In parallel, schools should promote data-driven planning by directly linking student performance outcomes to school improvement strategies, ensuring that decisions are grounded in evidence rather than assumptions. This requires enhancing professional development programmes to build the capacity of ISQA committees and school leaders in areas such as data analysis, instructional supervision, and quality assurance processes, thereby equipping them to interpret information accurately and implement targeted interventions. Adequate resources must also be allocated to guarantee that planning and assessment initiatives are fully implemented and not left as aspirational documents, enabling schools to translate improvement plans into tangible actions. Most importantly, ISQA needs to be repositioned as a developmental process rather than a compliance exercise, fostering a culture of continuous improvement in which both teachers and students are actively involved and empowered to contribute to the shaping of educational quality in their schools.

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9.0 Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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