

# ENSURING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL IN TANZANIA: EVIDENCE FROM GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS

Subiri Katete

Assistant Lecturer, Institute of Adult Education  
P.O. Box 20679 Dar es Salaam, TANZANIA  
mwashiutwe@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

Quality assurance practices are recognized as essential instruments in maintaining required educational standards. In this regard, nations worldwide have always been striving to ensure that education standards are met through quality assurance and control practices. This paper investigates the contributions of quality assurance and control practices to ensuring students' academic achievement in technical institutions in Tanzania. The study participants included Diploma students and quality assurance officers. Data were collected through focus group discussions and interviews. The results show that quality assurance and control practices influenced academic achievement among students in government technical institutions in several ways. These include setting appropriate objectives in teaching and learning, helping in education quality control, improving self-efficiency among tutors, improving tutors' and students' accountability, and helping in a quality audit of the learning process. Therefore, this study recommends strong quality assurance practices in government technical institutions.

**Keywords:** Quality assurance, Academic achievement, technical institutions, Quality, Tanzania.

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, students' academic achievement is the dream of every education stakeholder. And the type of academic achievement should be of quality in nature. Quality education in technical institutions primarily depends on tutors, school infrastructure, management, and their capacity to improve the teaching and learning process (Phillymon, 2020). It is widely recognized that the quality of tutors and teaching facilities are at the heart of all schooling systems that intend to offer quality education in technical institutions (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2017).

At the World Conference on Education for All Nations, organized by UNESCO in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, quality assurance and control in education became a developing policy perspective in the modern world. International community representatives concurred that all nations should focus more on enhancing the accomplishment of recognized and quantifiable learning outcomes in schools, particularly in literacy, numeracy, and fundamental life skills (UNESCO, 2022). Setting appropriate learning and teaching objectives, providing the intellectual and material resources to support these objectives, monitoring and improving learning and teaching performance annually, and assessing the success in achieving learning and teaching objectives are all part of the quality assurance and control responsibilities (Otieno, 2020).

Technical education is a kind of education that focuses on educating and preparing individuals for competent, skillful performance in any work put in front of them. It is a kind of educational training or retraining that aims to increase productivity in the learner or pupils through

performance in paid work or self-employment (John, 2020). It must serve as the foundation upon which a nation's economic, technological, and cultural growth is to be formed (Dismas, 2020; Mwambogela, 2017). The main goals of this type of education revolve around the socio-economic, industrial, and technological objectives that will be evident in an improved standard of living for citizens as well as in economic stability, industrial harmony, and technological advancement. This type of education involves the application of specialized learning techniques in the realization of both educational and societal objectives. Therefore, technical education prepares a person for financial independence, self-actualization, and productivity in a variety of academic subjects. Societal advancement and socio-economic security may result from this, and the emphasis is not just on the provision of skilled labor for a dynamic environment, especially one with changing social needs for technological advancement (Ulinfun, 2018). It also has the economic role of providing a qualified workforce by enabling individuals to use complicated technology (Ulinfun, 2018).

Quality assurance approaches in technical institutions encompass a range of mechanisms (tools, processes, and actors) to monitor overall system performance, policy implementation, technical institution and staff effectiveness, and individual student outcomes. School systems include various layers, operate in diverse contexts, and employ staff with a range of experience and competencies. External mechanisms provide data important for policy-level decisions and resource allocation, while internal evaluations provide more detailed and timely data important for school-level development and support teaching and learning. Schools and external institutions and actors may work together to define strategies and alternatives for school improvement (Fungilwa, 2021).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous academics concur that quality assurance and control play important roles in students' academic success at all schooling levels in various circumstances (Hossain, Khan & Islam, 2019; Kambuga & Dadi, 2015; Kosia, 2018). The study by Matete (2021) attested that quality assurance and control facilitates recognition of the standards of an award, serves public accountability purposes, aids in student choice, contributes to improved teaching, learning, and administrative processes, and aids in the dissemination of best practices intending to result in an overall improvement of higher education. John (2020) adds that in a school, quality assurance and control is identifying the intended outcome of particular services and programs—this is more challenging than it sounds. Then scheduling regular and recurring times to assess the degree to which those outcomes are met. On the same note, quality assurance and control aim to maintain and improve its quality, equity, and efficiency (Dismas, 2020; Fasasi & Oyeniran, 2014).

The study by Matete (2021) maintains that teaching observations are a frequent element of the quality assurance process throughout the year. This is essential to ensure the students (customers) receive quality service (teaching). The observed performance will be recorded and used during staff reviews to identify areas for improvement. Also, Aguti (2015) views that the progress and success of students are monitored throughout the year. This will include predicted grades, attendance, and retention at various points throughout the year.

Similarly, External Quality Assurance (EQA) will be conducted by an external verifier appointed by the awarding organization (Fungilwa, 2021). The external verifier will ensure the internal verification is conducted and essential procedures are followed. In some instances marking quality will also be assessed (John, 2020). Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is conducted throughout the year and comprises moderation of assignment briefs, marking

verification, and sometimes double-anonymized marking (Adegoke, 2022). Musaaazi (2016) concluded that the quality assurance and control process provides fairness, accountability, and credibility for students and the marks awarded.

A study conducted in Zimbabwe by Nkala and Ncube (2020) on quality assurance and control practices indicated that co-curricular and extracurricular activities associated with student learning and personal development should be implemented in technical institutions to bring quality outcomes to students. Another study which was conducted in Nigeria by Adegbesan (2021) on quality assurance and control reveals that the quality assurance and control process guides the tutors to teach what students are supposed to learn, at what time, and strategies to be employed during the teaching and learning process and other supporting materials to achieve the intended goals.

Moreover, there was a study conducted by Marsh and Farrell (2015) in a study the role of quality assurance and control on students' academic achievements in technical institutions in the US. The findings revealed that regular observation of what occurs in the classroom helped model tutors improve teaching and learning. This was made possible when internal quality assurance was put in place. It was also found that frequent close checking of the suitability of education materials facilitated improved classroom instructions. In Malawi, there was a study by Musika (2019) on school monitoring as part of quality assurance and control suggests that conducting internal school evaluation by internal school quality assurers provides insight into the level of effectiveness of school staff members and allows commitment in exercising their administrative functions in achieving goals and aims of the school concerning teaching and learning environment. In Uganda, the study conducted by Musaaazi (2016) on internal school quality assurance for monitoring and evaluation proposed that to maintain effective teaching and learning, the internal evaluators regularly need to conduct class observation and design a form of "monitoring tool" for tracking tutors in classrooms attendance, punctuality, teaching and time on task. It was revealed that the teaching and learning pace has been very effective and efficient, thus resulting in the accomplishment of the school goals and instructional objectives at a given time

In general, from the literature, it has been shown that quality assurance and control are vital to students' academic achievements among learners in technical institutions. Unfortunately, In Tanzania, little is known about how the quality assurance and control process contributes to academic achievement among students because of death studies conducted in technical institutions. Therefore, this paper aims to fill the gap in the literature by addressing the following question: How quality assurance and control process contributes to students' academic achievement in government technical institutions?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was designed to investigate the contributions of quality assurance and control on students' academic achievement in government technical institutions in Tanzania. The qualitative approach as a method of inquiry was employed in this study. Data were collected through focus group discussions and interviews. The present study employed a qualitative research approach because it seemed more applicable in capturing individuals' thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of the meaning and process in their natural settings. Also, the study employed a qualitative research approach because it seemed helpful in getting in-depth opinions from participants and exploring attitudes, behavior, and experiences, which are essential as only a limited number of people participate in the research (Dawson, 2009; Omari, 2011). Moreover, a qualitative approach to research was adopted because it seems essential in

obtaining first-hand information on contributions of quality assurance and control on academic achievements among students, most of which seemed to happen mainly qualitatively.

Focus group discussion was chosen as a data collection tool because the researcher wanted to identify ideas, opinions, and beliefs from the informants. Also, focus group discussion was used because it is an inexpensive and quick method of collecting rich data (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, the study used focus group discussion as a data collection method because it generated new ideas. On the other hand, an interview was chosen as a data collection tool because it assisted in getting a broad understanding of experiences of identifying participants about the issues under investigation. Also, the interviews seemed appropriate for this study because they helped to motivate participants to express extensive issues regarding quality assurance and control of academic achievements among students (Dornyei, 2017). Data for the study were collected from Dar es Salaam. This region was purposively selected because it has many government technical institutions. A total of 5 focus group discussions were conducted in two technical institutions. Each group consisted of five participants. Also, a total of five tutors were interviewed. The information from the focus group discussions and interviews was audio recorded and later on transcribed verbatim.

### **Data Analysis Process**

According to Braun and Clarke (2013), a thematic method was used to analyze the data, and pertinent themes were found, articulated, and illustrated through participant quotes. Earlier, a research permit was secured from the appropriate authorities before data gathering could begin. The relevant authorities and technical institutions were contacted for their informed consent to proceed with the study. The respondents' anonymity and the confidentiality of the data collected were guaranteed.

## **RESULTS**

Several issues emerged from the focus group discussions and interviews regarding the contributions of quality assurance and control on students' academic achievement in government technical institutions in Tanzania. These are discussed below.

### **Quality Assurance and Control Sets Appropriate Objectives in Teaching and Learning**

Education institutions always set appropriate and clear goals for the teaching and learning process that must be achieved. Quality assurance plays a crucial role in the educational system by ensuring that the goals are achieved. Most participants in the focus groups and interviews concurred that quality assurance functions as a watchdog to ensure that the goals of teaching and learning are realized in government technical institutions. The following explanations were provided by the participants:

Whether internal or external, quality assurance processes are essential to ensure that our institutions follow the specified goals, considering how they determined whether we successfully achieved our teaching and learning goals (Interview, Tutor of Technical Institution B).

We take pride in our institutions' quality assurance procedures. Since the previous academic year, we have seen specific changes, particularly in teaching and learning. Consider how the locations where we used to do exams have grown to accommodate more students while still having excellent arrangements, as opposed to the congestion we experienced in the previous year. One of the established objectives is to ensure that teaching and learning standards are met (FGD, Students Technical Institution A).

### **Quality Assurance Helps in Quality Control**

Results showed that ensuring the delivery of set standards to meet agreed learning outcomes was a continuous process that ensured quality in education. Participants admitted that quality assurance was crucial to guarantee that technical institutions developed and operated under the established standards and curriculum. During interviews, participants expressed the following views:

A quality assurance mechanism is constantly in place to guarantee that the quality is under control. For instance, annual learning process monitoring improves student and tutor performance. This is made possible because quality controllers, both internal and external, have a responsibility to increase the output's quality (Interview, Tutor of Technical Institution A).

Remembering the strong relationship between quality assurance and quality control is crucial. While quality control is mainly the inspection component of quality management, quality assurance is more concerned with how a process is carried out or a product is manufactured. In this regard, quality assurance professionals often visit institutions to ensure that students leave government technical colleges with high-quality capabilities at the end of their coursework (Interview, Tutor of Technical Institution B).

### **Quality Assurance and Control Improves Self-efficiency among Tutors**

Findings revealed that the quality assurance and control process improved tutors' self-efficiency since teaching and learning were ongoing. They were expected to bring about desired student engagement and learning outcomes, even when students were difficult or unmotivated. This was made possible because quality assurance officers tended to have a thorough discussion with tutors after the visit. This increased self-efficiency among tutors as they gave the following testimonies:

As tutors, we realized that we needed to create some teaching strategies to help our pupils learn the critical abilities that will benefit them in the future. However, following the inspections, during our interactions with the quality assurance officers, we learned crucial information that helped us become more effective in our teaching and learning (Interview, Tutor of Technical Institution A).

Quality assurance procedures mainly assess our abilities to facilitate teaching and learning. Through this assessment, we improve our subject-matter mastery and, in the long run, discover how to impart the proper knowledge to our students (Interview, Tutor of Technical Institution B).

### **Quality Assurance and Control Improves Tutors and Students' Accountability**

Findings revealed that the quality assurance and control process was vital to tutors' and students' accountability. Participants reported that since quality was emphasized among learners, both tutors and students had obligations to fulfill. During focus group discussions and interviews, participants reported the following:

Standards compliance is ensured by quality assurance. This involves whether the curriculum is adequately developed and adhered to and whether the learning environment is favorable and similar. Note that all of them aim to guarantee that we learn effectively and meet our learning objectives. Quality control subtly reminds us of our responsibility for the learning process (FGD, Students Technical Institution A).

Accountability to the teaching and learning process is required of tutors through quality assurance procedures. We can act professionally in school processes thanks to accountability.

In this regard, we observe that student academic success is attained as we follow the institution's

### **Quality Assurance Helps in Quality Audit of Learning Process**

Findings revealed that the quality assurance process helped examine government technical institutions' quality and learning process. Participants disclosed that quality assurance, whether internal or external, checked if the quality of education (teaching and learning) provided enables students to attain standards and that the assessment is conducted at the right level of the standards. Participants further disclosed the following:

Quality assurance is vital. It helps in the quality audit of the learning process because it checks if our institution is influential, discharging its responsibilities for the standards of awards granted in their name or the name of their certification body (Interview, Tutor of Technical Institution B).

The quality assurers conduct an audit of the educational process's learning quality. Education quality auditing is an examination of the entire system to determine the legitimacy and authenticity of the institution's rules and policies, its guiding principles, and the input provided to its stakeholders, including parents and students. This is done to ensure that good academic achievement among learners is achieved (Interview, Tutor of Technical Institution B).

It is evidenced that the quality assurance and control process is vital to students' academic achievement. Government technical institutions are boastful with quality assurance processes to enhance academic success among students.

### **DISCUSSION**

This study found that quality assurance practices impact student academic achievement in government technical institutions in Tanzania. One of the identified contributions of quality assurance in academic achievement among students is that quality assurance and control sets appropriate objectives in teaching and learning. The findings are in tandem with Fedeli (2016), who viewed that quality assurance and control when undertaken to ensure that the learning objectives set by the institutions, are both realistic and being met. The findings also are in line with Berner (2017), who found that in education, quality assurance and control is an essential issue as parents, students, and educators want to ensure that all students receive adequate skills for the future, and this will be better achieved if set learning objectives are met.

The findings also revealed that quality assurance practices help in quality control. Makiya, Mnyanyi, and Ngirwa (2022) maintain that the learners' quality must be adhered to in education. This will be done simply by looking into the skills acquired during the learning process. Swai (2019) adds that quality assurance is necessary to guarantee the validity of students' qualifications. Mmasa and Anney (2016) concluded that internal and external quality assurance must be strengthened since they play a significant role in ensuring quality among learners.

Moreover, the findings revealed that quality assurance and control improve self-efficiency among tutors. This is because quality assurance practices were like mirrors that enabled tutors to reflect on teaching methods employed, whether they were in line with the set objectives and curriculum put in place. Mgaiwa and Ishengoma (2017) maintain that tutors' beliefs in their ability to effectively handle the tasks, obligations, and challenges related to their professional activity play a crucial role in influencing

critical academic outcomes (e.g., students' achievement and motivation) and well-being in the working environment. Musaazi (2016) adds that after a quality assurance visit, tutors make judgments of self-efficacy based on the perceptions of past teaching experiences (mastery experiences). In this way, they improve self-efficiency among themselves.

Furthermore, the participants who participated in the study disclosed that quality assurance and control improve tutors' and students' accountability. The emphasis is put on quality assurance, which always demands that both students and tutors be accountable in the learning process. Marsh and Farrell (2015) contend that through quality assurance practices, a tutor is expected to assess every student based on their capabilities to enhance the learners' academic achievement. Machumu and Kisanga (2014) add that quality assurance practices emphasize tutors' accountability because they enable tutors to exhibit professional behavior in school processes. As a result, professional behaviors result in students' academic achievement.

On the other hand, Bosu and Amakyi (2014) argue that student accountability is necessary because it encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and actions. Students learn to value their work and likely increase their levels of confidence. However, this is done when the learning environment is conducive, as quality assurers emphasize.

Another contribution of quality assurance practices mentioned by the participants is that quality assurance helps in the quality audit of the learning process. Swai (2019) views that a quality assurance and control system ensures that an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality mechanisms established by an institution itself to continuously monitor and improve the activities and services of either a subject or a program is done to ensure that learning objectives are met. Mgaiwa and Ishengoma (2017) add that a quality audit is a verification effort to evaluate the degree of conformance to meet a standard specification or procedure of the product, design, process, or system in education.

## CONCLUSION

Generally, the contribution of quality assurance practices in government institutions globally cannot be underscored. This is because the purpose of quality assurance is to confirm that the work of the learners has been quality assured to the appropriate standard. Without quality assurance practices in education, there would be nothing guaranteeing the validity of students' acquiring skills and knowledge. Thus, it is high time for the government technical institutions to strengthen both internal and external quality assurance practices.

## REFERENCES

- Adegbesan, S. O. (2011). Establishing quality assurance in Nigerian education system: Implication for educational managers. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(2), 147–151.
- Aguti, S. (2015). *School inspection and its influence in the quality development of inclusive education practices in Uganda*. Master thesis, University of Oslo.
- Berner, A. (2017). *Would school inspection work in United States?* Institute for Education Policy.

- Bosu, R., & Amakyi, M. (2014). Getting ready for accreditation: Internal quality assurance in teacher education institutions in Ghana. *Journal of Business Administration and Education*, 5(1), 44-54.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *Psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). SAGE publications.
- Dawson, C. (2009). *Practical research methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Dismas, Z. (2020). *Education stakeholders perception on effectiveness of new school quality assurance tools : A case of public primary schools in Kilolo district, Tanzania*. Master dissertation, Univeristy of Dodoma.
- Dorneyi, Z. (2017). Explaining motivation in language learning: A framework for evaluation and research. *Language Learning Journal*, 47(2), 1-17.
- Fasasi, Y. A., & Oyeniran, S. (2014). Assessing principals' quality assurance strategies in Osun state secondary schools, Nigeria. *International Journal of Instruction*, 7(1), 165-176.
- Fedeli, L. (2016). *Comparative study on students' involvement in quality assurance*. The European Students Union.
- Fungilwa, A.C. (2021). *Effectiveness of internal school quality assurance in teaching and learning among public secondary schools in Tanzania: A case of Njombe town council*. Master Thesis, University of Dodoma.
- Hossain, M. A., Khan, S. U., & Islam, S. (2019). Implementation status of sustainable development goals (SDGS) in Bangladesh: A Statistical Approach. *The National Bureau of Statistics*, 4(2), 551-559.
- John, S. G. (2020). *Teachers' perceptions on the implementation of internal school quality assurance in public primary schools in Tanzania: A case of Dodoma city*. Master dissertation, Univeristy of Dodoma.
- Kambuga, Y., & Dadi, H. (2015). School inspection in Tanzania as a motor for education quality: Challenges and possible way forward. *Review of Knowledge Economy*, 2(1), 1-13.
- Kosia, E. N. M., & Okendo, E. O. (2018). Effects of school quality assurance communication officers' feedback in improving teaching and learning in Arusha city public secondary schools, Tanzania. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 7(9)
- Machumu, H.J., & Kisanga, S.H. (2014). Quality assurance practices in higher education institutions: Lesson from Africa. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(16), 144-156.
- Makiya, R., Mnyanyi, C., & Ngirwa, C. (2022). Quality assurance strategies in enhancing learning achievement among public primary schools in Arusha region, Tanzania. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 48-57.
- Marsh, J. A., & Farrell, C. C. (2015). How leaders can support teachers with data driven decision making: A framework for understanding capacity building. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 43(2), 269-289.
- Mgaiwa, S. J., & Ishengoma, J. M. (2017). Institutional constraints affecting quality assurance processes in Tanzania's private universities. *Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa*, 15(1), 57-67.
- Mmasa, M., & Anney, V. N. (2016). Exploring literacy and numeracy teaching in Tanzanian classrooms: Insights from teachers' classroom practices. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(9), 137-154.
- Musaazi, J.C.S. (2016). *Educational planning: Principles, tools and applications in developing countries*. Makerere University Printers.



- Musika, F. G. W.(2019). *Curriculum reform and quality higher education in the university of Malawi: A Study of the Current State of Affairs*. Sage Publishers.
- Mwambogela. (2017). *School inspection strategies and quality provision of secondary education in Tanzania: A case of Mbeya city*. Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania.
- Nkala, P., Ncube, M. (2020). Institutional structures for student-inclusivity in quality assurance promotion in higher education: The case of one university in Zimbabwe. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 34(5), 92-108.
- Omari, I. M. (2011). *Concepts and methods in educational research*. Oxford University Press.
- Otieno, W. (2020). *Access and equity in higher education: Assessing financing policies in Kenya*. Unpublished Report to Sizanang' Centre for Research and Development, Johannesburg.
- Phillymon, D. (2020). *The contribution of quality assurance and control on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Missenyi district, Kagera region, Tanzania*. Masters of Education in Administration, Planning and Policy Studies (MED-APPS), The Open University of Tanzania.
- Swai, C. (2019). *Big results now in Tanzanian education: A critical perspective*. Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.
- UNESCO. (2022). *The 8<sup>th</sup> internal conference on education innovations in secondary education: Meeting the needs of adolescents and youth in Asia and the Pacific*. UNESCO.
- Unlinfun, F.E (2018) Business education utility education in a developing economy. *Business Education Journal*, 1(6), 12-19.