



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



A mixed-methods investigation of constraints hindering school heads in the implementation of internal quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Morogoro Region, Tanzania

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Abstract

The quality of educational outcomes in public secondary schools relies on the effective Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) practices in which school heads are key administrators. Grounded in the System Theory of Management, the study Investigated Constraints hindering School Heads in the Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools in the Morogoro Region, Tanzania. The study adopted a pragmatist research philosophy, employing a convergent research design using a mixed-method research approach, the sample size for this study comprises 371 respondents, including 25 public secondary schools, 225 teachers, 100 Internal Quality Assurance Team (SIQATs) members, 7 Chief District Quality Assurance Officers (CDQAOs), and 7 District Secondary Education Officers (DSEOs) from the 7 districts of the Morogoro region. Questionnaire instruments were administered to teachers for quantitative data collection, and structured interviews were done with CDQAOs and DSEOs for qualitative data, as well as Focus group discussions (FGDs) with SIQATs. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 20, presented in frequency and percentages, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis procedures. The findings revealed that HoS encounter constraints, including inadequate resources, limited professional development opportunities, and bureaucratic delays, which collectively hinder the effective implementation of IQA practices. The study concludes that IQA practices are vital in fostering accountability and improving educational quality but require targeted interventions to overcome these constraints. The findings recommend sufficient budget allocations for IQA practices, mandatory capacity building programs for teachers and HoS, and enhanced collaboration with stakeholders to align IQA practices with Tanzania's National Strategy for Quality Assurance in Education.

Keywords: Quality Assurance; Internal Quality Assurance; School Heads; Public Secondary Schools

1. Introduction

In the education arena, Internal Quality assurance has emerged as a critical tool for school improvement, particularly in developing countries where educational outcomes remain uneven. Globally, the educational discourse is driven by the need to ensure that educational systems deliver equitable, relevant, and high-quality education outcomes that align with 21st-century demands (Nyerere, 2022). According to Suyanto and Ulfah (2024), the IQA acts as a tool for institutional self-assessment, promoting continuous improvement, strategic planning, and data-driven decision-making across educational institutions. IQA practices become essential in aligning instructional practices, resource utilization, and administrative accountability with the national standards of educational quality. Yet, the evidence suggests that despite the policy emphasis on IQA reforms by many educational institutions, their implementation remains inconsistent due to constraining factors at the institutional level, such as resource constraints and leadership capacity, particularly in developing countries (Olowonefa & Ogunode, 2021). In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the evidence has identified

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financial limitations, inadequate infrastructure, and low stakeholder involvement as key impediments to effective IQA practices (Odenda 2024; Odimegwu, 2021). Connected to that, Kenya highlights a range of IQA implementation constraints, including insufficient funding, a lack of trained personnel, and a weak policy framework (Kukali, 2023). This signifies that the East African region undergoes the same limitations to IQA practices across PSSs. The interplay between structural constraints and leadership competencies creates an important focus for understanding the uneven implementation of IQA in PSSs, particularly in Tanzania.

The decentralization of educational management by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) in Tanzania aimed at enabling school leaders to take ownership of IQA practices and promote autonomy in school-level decision-making. The National Strategy for Quality Assurance in Education (TNSQAE), introduced to align with global education standards, emphasizes the role of school-based quality assurance mechanisms URT, (2023) whereby the Public Secondary Schools are tasked with delivering quality education to meet national benchmarks for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on inclusive and equitable education, as it is stipulated in Targets 4.1 and 4.2 (ESCAP, 2019). IQA, encompassing a systematic process to monitor, evaluate, and enhance their educational standards, is vital in achieving these goals (Suyanto and Ulfah, 2024). However, their successful implementation hinges on the capacity of HoS who serve as the linchpins of quality assurance across schools. HoS in PSSs education system are entrusted with the responsibility of driving IQA practices to ensure academic excellence and institutional accountability (URT, 2023, sect 4.4.1). These practices include curriculum implementation, teacher professional development, student performance monitoring, and stakeholder engagement (URT, 2017). Despite their importance, the evidence suggests that HoS face multifaceted constraints that impede effective IQA practices, ranging from resource limitations to systemic inefficiencies. Understanding these constraints is crucial for designing effective interventions that strengthen educational leadership and enhance school outcomes in resource-constrained areas such as the Morogoro region in Tanzania.

The theoretical framework guiding this study draws on Ludwig von Bertalanffy's system theory of management, which posits that schools operate as an interconnected system in which leadership, resources, and processes interact to produce outcomes (Ramage & Shipp, 2020). Within this framework, HoS are viewed as central actors who navigate internal and external dynamics to implement IQA practices. Constraints at any level, whether human, financial, or structural, can disrupt the system functionality, leading to suboptimal educational outcomes. This perspective offers a lens for examining the interplay between leadership constraints and the effectiveness of IQA.

1.1. Research Question

What are the constraints hindering School Heads in the Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools?

2. Literature Review

The theoretical and empirical were reviewed. The system theory of management guided the study.

2.1. System Theory of Management

The system theory pioneered by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the mid-20th Century views organizations as interconnected systems where components interact to achieve common goals (Khaki-Sedigh, 2025). It emphasizes a holistic approach where managers (school leaders) focus on how departments work together rather than individual performance. The theory is applied in the study as schools operate as complex systems with interdependent elements (teachers, students, resources, and policies) that influence the implementation of IQA practices. By employing system theory, the study analyzes how constraints in one part of the school system, such as resource shortages and policy misalignment, ripple across other components, affecting the HoS's ability to ensure effective implementation of IQA practices in PSSs.

2.2. Strengths of the System Theory of Management

Ludwig von Bertalanffy's systems theory offers a framework for understanding the complexities of implementing IQA practices in PSSs. Its strengths lie in its approach of emphasizing the interconnectedness of various school components, including leadership, teachers, students, resources, and administrative processes within a dynamic system. By viewing the school as an integrated whole, system theory enables HoS to identify how changes in one area, such as IQA policies, impact others, fostering coordinated strategies that enhance overall institutional effectiveness. This perspective helps address constraints by promoting adaptive, collaborative, and systemic solutions to improve educational outcomes.

2.3. Application of System Theory of Management to the current study

The theory views the institutions (schools) as an interconnected system comprising subsystems such as administration, teaching staff, students, resources, IQA policies, and external stakeholders, all interacting within a broader socio-educational environment. It is applied in this study to investigate how school heads operate as a central component managing inputs such as resources, policies, and stakeholders' expectations processes through IQA practices, including curriculum delivery, and staff training to ensure educational outputs (student performance and school excellence). Constraints arising from systemic factors such as inadequate funding, conflicting stakeholders' demands, and bureaucratic delays disrupt the feedback loops essential for maintaining and achieving IQA goals. By understanding these interdependencies through the lens of system theory, the study highlights the need for holistic strategies that align subsystems and address external pressure to enhance IQA effectiveness.

2.4. Empirical Review

2.4.1. Constraints hindering School Heads in the Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools

Osegbue and Ohamobi (2025) employed a quantitative survey research design to investigate principals' administrative strategies for achieving quality assurance in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Data was collected through questionnaires administered to principals and teachers, and analyses using descriptive statistics and simple inferential tests to establish patterns in principals' practices and perceived barriers to quality assurance implementations. Their findings show that public secondary schools in Nigeria lack adequate funding to effectively implement QA mechanisms, which were treated as contextual obstacles on which principals adjust their administrative strategies, rather than as a phenomenon that limit QA process within Delta state schools. Their work provided an in-depth understanding, capturing perceptions at the general system of QA, though not investigating how the barriers interact with school principals in everyday IQA practices at the school level, such as monitoring, self-evaluation, use of data for continuous improvement, and participatory decision-making. This created a contextual, methodological, and conceptual gap with different governance, accountability, and decentralization arrangements in PSSs education systems. Employing a mixed-methods research approach, the current study sought to address the gaps.

Anchored in a school-based QA framework, Wanjiru and Joseph (2026) employed a mixed methods design utilizing questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis to assess how internal monitoring, evaluation, and competence-based pedagogy were implemented in Kampala secondary schools. The descriptive statistics and thematic analysis procedures clarified constraints such as limited training in IQA evaluation techniques, a shortage of resources, and limited regular classroom observations, which undermine follow-up on competence-based assessment. In their study, school leaders were treated as part of the management team, thereby facing vulnerability, accountability pressure, and school realities that shape their implementation practices. Building on their methodological strengths, the current study employed a convergent research design, refining sample size and sampling techniques to investigate the constraints faced by HoS in implementing IQA practices in PSSs in Morogoro Region, Tanzania. In contrast to Wanjiru and Joseph (2026), who focus on QA for competence-based education, the current study provided a deeper understanding of systemic and structural constraints faced by HoS in implementing IQA practices grounded on the system theory of management.

Eliamini and Otieno (2024) explored how Quality Assurance services improve supervision of public secondary schools in Arusha City Council, Tanzania. Utilizing Survey and interviews with school heads, teachers and quality assurers, the study revealed that monitoring of the lesson plan, teaching and learning evaluations, and feedback mechanisms enhanced instructional quality and accountability, although the mechanisms fall short due to shortage of funds, limited training capacity among the teaching staff, and weak follow-up mechanisms that limit heads of school to sustain quality in public secondary schools. While their work highlighted broad influence on supervision, it overlooked specific constraints heads of schools' encounter in supervising internal quality assurance implementation. Building on these conceptual limitations, the current study extends the evidence, focusing on PSSs in the Morogoro region, on how school heads experience constraints in the daily implementation of the IQA practices.

In the same vein, Medard & Mwila (2022) also carried out a study in Temeke Municipality in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to explore the implementation of IQA guidelines in the promotion of quality teaching and learning. The findings revealed that IQA was fairly implemented within public secondary schools, but not fully implemented. The core components of the Tanzania secondary schools' Quality Assurance framework were not considered important, which limits the full potential of IQA mechanisms in enhancing teaching-learning practices in PSSs. The study noted IQA implementation challenges at the school-level IQA guidelines. However, the study focuses the IQA guideline and its limitation on urban public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality, overlooking the systemic constraints for both urban and rural public

secondary schools' context. The current study focuses on the rural and urban contexts of the Morogoro region, Tanzania, to expand the evidence-based literature using a mixed-method research approach focusing on the school-level constraints hindering heads of schools in the implementation of IQA practices in public secondary schools.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Area

The Morogoro region was preferred due to the disparities arising between the policy directives and internal quality assurance practical realities within public secondary schools, as highlighted by Kissa and Wandela (2022) that the region has uneven resource allocation and variation in leadership capacity across public secondary schools. In addition to that, according to PO-RALG, (2024), the region's ongoing education reforms, increasing student enrollment rates, and government emphasis on accountability prompted the need to investigate how school heads navigate within the competing demands under constrained education settings to provide empirical insights that contribute to refining education system and inform sustainable strategies for improving educational quality in the Morogoro region, Tanzania.

3.2. Research Philosophy

The study adopted a Pragmatist research philosophy, which insists that the value of knowledge lies in its utility and ability to solve problems, rather than in adherence to fixed ideologies. It emphasizes practical outcomes and real-world applications.

3.3. The Research Approach and Design

A convergent mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data, was used to better understand the research problem. By collecting data in a structured and organised manner, the study reduced bias and ensured the reliability and validity of the study findings.

3.4. Targeted Population

The population of the study was 2,652, consisting of 2,250 teachers from 250 public secondary schools, 125 school internal quality assurance team members, 09 CDQAOs, and 09 DSEOs from 09 Districts of the Morogoro Region, Tanzania.

3.4.1. Sample size and Sampling techniques

The sample size of the study consisted of 371 respondents, comprising 225 teachers, sampled using proportionate simple random sampling from 250 public secondary schools. The 10% - 30% criterion of the targeted population was used for the big population (teachers) to obtain representations and reliability of the findings (Bullen, 2021). The study sampled 25 schools of the population, which was 10% of the targeted public secondary school's population by using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The technique was preferred because the district councils have different numbers of schools. 100 internal quality assurance team members were obtained using homogenous purposive sampling. The technique was preferred because where a group has a similar understanding of the topic, it is acceptable to include 4-8 members in the FGDs to express their ideas clearly without unnecessary noise (Lichtman, 2023). The 7 CDQAOs and 7 DSEOs were obtained through expert sampling as the head of monitoring and evaluation of IQA educational practices to ensure compliance with the set standards and regulations (URT, 2023). It should be noted that the remaining 02 officers in 02 district were involved in the pilot study; hence, they were excluded from the main investigation.

Table 1 The Summary of the Sampling Matrix

SN	Categories	Targeted Population	Sample Size
1.	District	09	07
2.	Schools	250	25
3.	Teachers	2,250	225
4.	School Internal Quality Assurance Teams	125	100
6.	CDQAOs	09	07

7	DSEOs	09	07
TOTAL		2652	371

3.5. Data Collection Instrument

The Questionnaire instrument was administered to teachers for quantitative data collection. Two experts from the education department at Jordan University College and one Quality Assurance expert validated the study tools. The reliability of the study tools was established using Cronbach's coefficient technique to calculate the dependability of the pilot results, yielding a grand mean reliability coefficient of 0.904. Qualitative data was collected through structured interviews with 07 CDQAOs, while focus group discussions were conducted with 25 ISQATs.

3.6. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in frequency and percentages, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, while the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis procedures

3.7. Ethical Consideration

The researcher obtained a research permit letter from both JUCo, the REO before beginning data collection. In the field, the researcher obtains consent from the participants while safeguarding the privacy of study participants by deleting their identities. In the questionnaire, the researcher employed anonymity so that individuals and schools would not display their names. Schools were noted by numbers rather than by their full names. In data analysis, codes and numbers were employed. The researcher recognizes every information source to prevent academic plagiarism, which is defined as failing to correctly credit, quote, or acknowledge the words or ideas of another person (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). Additionally, the researcher followed APA guidelines by citing study data using the 7th edition of the APA manual in citing books, journal articles, tables, figures, quotes, and other significant elements in the manuscript.

4. Results and Discussions

The researcher issued 225 questionnaires to the respondents, and 201 questionnaires were returned, which accounts 89.3% return rate. The objective sought to investigate how constraints hinder HoS in implementing IQA Practices in PSSsin the Morogoro Region, Tanzania. The data are presented in Table 2

4.1. What are the constraints hindering School Heads in the Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools?

Table 2 Teachers' responses on how constraints hinder Head of Schools in implementing IQA Practices in PSSs

S/N	Statement	Responses (F & %)									
		SD		D		N		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	The existing Internal Quality Assurance guideline is not well communicated to teachers	44	21.9	74	36.9	05	2.5	66	32.8	12	5.9
2.	Bureaucratic delay limits the head of the school's ability to implement internal quality assurance practices	28	14.0	54	26.8	02	1.0	74	36.9	43	21.3
3.	Insufficient resources (e.g., funding, equipment, materials) to support internal quality assurance practices	40	19.9	09	4.5	04	2.0	103	51.2	45	22.4
4.	Conflicting priorities disrupt management processes	13	6.5	53	26.3	02	1.0	73	36.3	60	29.9
5.	Teachers are not adequately trained on how to implement internal quality assurance practices	23	11.4	41	20.5	03	1.5	80	39.8	54	26.8

6.	There is no clear strategy for a continuous improvement plan in our school	36	17.9	49	24.3	11	5.4	59	29.3	46	22.8
7.	Lack of updated Internal Quality Assurance guidelines affects quality efforts	68	33.8	46	22.9	0	0	33	16.4	54	26.8

Key: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree(D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA)

Source: Field Data (2025)

4.1.1. Limited Communication and Dissemination of Existing Guidelines

The data in Table 2 indicate that 58.8% of respondents disagreed, while 38.7% agreed that the existing IQA guideline is not well communicated to teachers. The findings highlight a critical gap within the educational management structure in information flow and coordination. According to Khaki-Sedigh (2025), in the system theory of management, a school operates as an open system where each subsystem, such as administration, teachers, students, and external QA officers, has to operate interchangeably for overall effectiveness. Poor communication of the IQA guideline reflects a breakdown in the feedback and linkage mechanisms between management levels, which weakens the system’s ability for self-regulation and continuous improvements. This finding is supported by Makiya et al. (2022) in the Arusha region, who observed that ineffective communication structures in public primary schools’ limit awareness and commitment to IQA implementation. This implies the same situation in public secondary schools, as the basic education system in Tanzania operates under the same National Quality Assurance Framework and the School Quality Assurance guideline. In addition to that, across sub-Saharan Africa, a study by Odenda (2024) in Nigeria confirms that fragmented disseminations of QA information hinder school-level interpretation and execution of policy directives. The qualitative data from the FGDs with the SIQATs reinforced this systemic weakness, as one focus group participant noted,

“We don’t have any formal guidelines, as a team; we are instructed by the head of school to conduct school monitoring of teaching and learning activities and prepare reports; therefore, we often carry out these tasks according to the directives received from our head of school. And, as a team, our task is to ensure that the required reports are available before the quality assurance officers’ school visit.” (FGD I Discussion, May, 2025).

Another member was asked how the IQA guideline is communicated to teachers and staff, and the answer was, *“We often hear about the IQA guideline when there is an external quality assurance visit; we do not discuss the guideline in our staff meetings.” (FGD H Discussion, May, 2025).*

Similar concern was raised by the DSEOs as one officer noted,

“...it is true that some of the school heads complain about being asked to direct their teachers to prepare the weekly monitoring reports on teaching and learning though there are no updated documented guidelines on how to prepare especially on the new subjects introduced, we have made efforts to urge our colleagues to consider the matter” (DSEO E interview, May, 2025).

The qualitative insights suggest the absence of formal communication loops and participatory dialogue within the educational institution system. This suggests that the internal school environment lacks the cohesive interaction necessary for institutional learning and adaptation. The finding indicates a need for an educational management system to strengthen its internal communication and feedback channels, ensuring a shared understanding, teacher engagement, and sustainable implementation of QA standards.

4.1.2. Bureaucratic Delays and Administrative Inefficiencies

The statistics in Table 2 indicate that bureaucratic delays represent a substantive but not universal constraint on the ability of HoS in Morogoro region PSSs to implement IQA practices, as 58.2% of teacher respondents agreed that delays hinder effective implementation, while 40.8% disagreed. The communication delay, authorization, and budget releases create inefficiencies that disrupt the cyclic process of planning, execution, monitoring, and improvements envisioned by the system theory. The study in Nyamagana-Mwanza has also reported that bureaucratic rigidity in educational institutions constrains teachers and school leaders in enforcing quality education transformation (Stanley & Mhagama, 2022). However, the proportion respondents who collectively disagree suggest that some HoS have developed adaptive mechanisms across schools, such as delegation, informal communication networks, and community partnerships to bypass procedural bottlenecks, indicating system resilience.

The qualitative data from the FGDs with SIQSTs revealed that excessive paperwork and prolonged approval resource allocation often delay implementation, with the FGDs member noting,

“Request for funds and other teaching and learning resources can take several weeks and sometimes months, which is a rigid hierarchical structure that hinders timely decision making and stalls school-level progress” (FGD K Discussion, May, 2025).

One of the CQAOs was asked what constraints HoS face in implementing IQA practices, and he replied,

“Currently, everything is requested through the online system; we often encounter school heads complaining about delays in receiving the necessary teaching and learning resources, with the common excuses being that the system is experiencing technical problems” (DCQAO F interview, May, 2025).

Through the lens of the system theory of management, the findings highlight the fragility of structural coordination within educational IQA, where schools operate as a sub-system that depends on timely feedback, availability of resources, and approval from higher administrative units. These findings align with a study by Mtitu et al. (2023) in Njombe Region, which identified bureaucratic bottlenecks as a key barrier to educational reforms. The findings suggest that the persistent bureaucratic delays risk undermining IQA effectiveness, compromising educational quality and accountability. Streamlining the administrative process through decentralizing decision-making can mitigate these delays and empower HoS to implement IQA practices more effectively.

4.1.3. Inadequate Resources to Support IQA Practices

Furthermore, the data in Table 2 show that 73.6% of respondents agree or strongly agree that insufficient resources, including funding, equipment, and materials, significantly constrained HoS in implementing IQA practices. Highlighting a critical barrier to effective IQA, resource scarcity limits the capacity to monitor teaching standards, procure necessary tools, and maintain conducive learning environments. FGDs with SIQSTs emphasized overcrowded classrooms and outdated materials as an obstacle to quality monitoring, as members said.

“The situation is worse and very challenging in our school due to overcrowding of students in the classroom; the teacher capacity and ability to reach individual students during teaching and learning sessions is simply not feasible, and relying on textbooks is also insufficient” (FGD I Discussion, May, 2025).

The insights from DSEO further highlighted bureaucratic delays in capitation grants disbursement and overreliance of external donors to fund PSSs projects which limits HoS internal systems. As one officer noted,

“The school operational funds are released with specific directives and sometimes delayed. It is not always possible to address every area of need, we focus on the most pressing priorities, while for some schools’ projects, we rely on support from donors” (DEO B interview, May, 2025).

Collectively, these findings suggest that without adequate structural resource allocations and feedback responsiveness, the IQA practices become a symbolic rather than a functional tool for continuous improvements in PSSs in the Morogoro region, Tanzania. Without increased government investment, schools will struggle to achieve Tanzania’s 2030 Educational Sector Development Plan goals, perpetuating educational inequities.

4.1.4. Disruptions Caused by Conflicting Administrative Priorities

The statistics reveal 66.2% of teachers agree that conflicting priorities disrupt the management process for implementing IQA practices. Through the lens of the system theory of management, which posits that schools function as interconnected subsystems where if one component affects another, then the entire organizational performance is affected. This implies that when HoS are overwhelmed by overlapping administrative demands such as instructional supervision, policy compliance, and resource management, the coherence and sustainability of IQA practices are compromised. This is supported by Medard and Mwila (2022) in Temeke Municipality, who confirm that multiple competing priorities often fragment managerial attention, leading to partial or inconsistent implementation of IQA mechanisms.

The qualitative insights from the FGDs with the SIQATs reinforced the findings, revealing that conflicting priorities, such as preparing for national exams versus IQA compliance, create confusion and dilute efforts, as one member said,

"We often find ourselves at a crossroads, between maintaining quality standards of teaching and learning processes while at the same time, our HoS is directed to prioritize continuous preparatory exams for the national examination, the District Director" (FGD J Discussion, May 2025).

Another member insisted,

"Meanwhile, parents also request that students attend study camps for exam preparation; for instance, it is May 19th today, but students are already in camps for continuous exam preparation. It is challenging as we are expected to teach while simultaneously preparing and revising exams almost daily" (FGD J Discussion, May, 2025).

The DCQAO in an interview informed that HoS often face competition demands, such as balancing IQA requirements with administrative duties and community expectations, stating.

"Indeed, the instructions provided to HoS sometimes confuse them, for example, we seek quality and want learning outcomes to reflect teaching not only in exams but also in other talents. However, we find that education officers tend to focus more on exam pass rates" (DCQAO I interview, May, 2025).

The findings align with a study by Ng'haboko (2024) in Chato, which found that competing administrative demands hinder IQA implementation, highlighting administrative confusion that undermines the feedback and control mechanisms essential for effective IQA implementation. The quality of any endeavor requires sound and timely decision-making. Without granting full autonomy to the HoS to effectively manage respective institutional administrative responsibilities, quality assurance at school level will remain merely as a compliance tool rather than an administrative tool for quality continuous improvement in public secondary schools across Morogoro region.

4.1.5. Insufficient Teacher Training on IQA Implementation

Based on the statistics, 66.6% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that inadequate training on IQA practices constrains HoS in implementing IQA practices, underscoring a critical capacity gap. The information provided by DSEO revealed that a limited professional development program hindered teachers' ability to effectively engage with IQA practices, with one officer noting,

"It is true that training for teachers and HoS is not regularly provided due to budget constraints, which are usually accompanied by specific directives. Therefore, the training we offer depends on the ministry of education directives and not ourselves as an institution" (DSEO H interview, May, 2025).

This was supported by Kitosi's (2021) findings in Kahama district, who identified insufficient teacher training as a barrier to IQA mechanisms, implying that without ongoing training programs, IQA implementation will remain ineffective, undermining educational quality.

4.1.6. Missing School Roadmap to Excellence

From the Data in Table 2, the findings reveal a polarized perception among respondents regarding the absence of a clear strategy for a continuous improvement plan in public secondary schools within the Morogoro region, Tanzania, with 52.1% of the respondents agreeing, 42.2% disagreeing, and 5.4% remaining neutral. The findings underscore systemic ambiguities in the IQA implementation that undermine school heads' efficacy as interpreted through the lens of the system theory, where feedback loops for ongoing refinement are disrupted. It implies a fragmented input-process-output dynamic that stifles adaptive management. This schism suggests entrenched barriers, such as inconsistent policy directives and resource deficits. Corroborating this quantitative data, one of the chief district quality assurance officers interviewed asserted,

"Without a full mandate and authority to ensure specified quality, it is difficult to achieve the prescribed goals because we are advisors and the implementers are the local government authorities" (CDQAO K interview, May, 2025).

The triangulated insights indicate that school heads constrain policy ambiguity, perpetuating open-system disequilibrium, suggesting a hybrid IQA model integrating a digital continuous dashboard for real-time analytics, thereby elevating teachers' buy-in from the current 52.1% to propel sustainable IQA in Tanzania public secondary schools.

4.1.7. Outdated guidelines undermine Quality Efforts

The statistics revealed a substantial majority, 56.7% of teacher respondents disagreed with the notion that the lack of updated IQA guidelines hampers quality efforts, while only 43.2% agreed, indicating a robust perception among teachers that existing guidelines remain sufficiently current and actionable to support IQA implementation in public secondary schools of the Morogoro region. The findings imply systemic resilience within the schools' input-throughput-output feedback loops, as framed by systems theory of management, where outdated guidelines do not constitute a primary constraint, allowing school heads to leverage available resources effectively for quality assurance processes. The qualitative insights from the FGDs with the SIQATs reinforced the findings, revealing that the guidelines are practical as they adapt them daily, like the checklist for lesson planning observation, as one member asserted,

"We have the guideline that directs us on how to conduct weekly teaching and learning follow-up and report issues." (FGD J Discussion, May, 2025). Similarly, the DCQAO affirmed during the interview, "Our guidelines are practical and communicated to school heads and school quality assurance teams" (DCQAO K interview, May, 2025).

These findings are supported by Khaki-Sedigh's (2025) system theory, emphasizing adaptive subsystems, highlighting that school heads can prioritize capacity-building over guideline revision, fostering emergent quality assurance transformation grounded in contextual adaptability rather than rigid bureaucratic overhauls.

5. Conclusion

Drawing on Ludwig von Bertalanffy's system theory of management, the findings conclude that the interconnectedness of school subsystems such as resources, policy, and capacity building among school heads is vital in enhancing the effective implementation of IQA practices in public secondary schools in the Morogoro region. Where deficiencies in one component, such as teacher training or limited communication, hinder administrative capacity, it disrupts the holistic implementation of the IQA as evidenced through quantitative and qualitative findings. Thus, it reflects a systemic failure of IQA practices' effectiveness to create an adaptive and cohesive educational environment for quality teaching and learning in public secondary schools in the Morogoro region.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends collaborative partnership between the government authorities and the non-governmental organization to mobilize funding and resources for schools, thereby enhancing timely resource allocation and availability across schools. Considering the capacity building for school heads and teachers, the government should roll out Continuous professional development programs using hybrid models such as WhatsApp-based micro learning modules supplemented by in-person workshops. For example, the Tanzania Institute of Education could develop IQA-focused training supporting Vision 2050's aim of building a competent teaching work force to drive quality education. To the Policy makers, the study recommends policy reform to provide a clear guidance on the effective ways for school heads to manage IQA practices without interference from other educational authorities. However, further research should focus on demonstrating best practices for implementing IQA practices at the school administrative level in Morogoro region.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

Authors(s) hereby declare that ChatGPT, generative AI technology, has been used during writing for editing and refining language to enhance clarity and coherence. The conceptualization, research, and core content of this article are the original work of the author

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