

# **External School Quality Assurance and its Influence on Instructional Leadership practices in Secondary School Education in Zanzibar**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated External School Quality Assurance (ESQA) and its influence on instructional practices in secondary school education in Zanzibar. The mixed-method research approach was employed coupled with a convergent parallel design. The study was conducted at Kaskazini Region in Unguja and it involved 167 teachers, 12 HoSs, 11 ESQ assurers, 2 District Educational Officers (DEOs), and the Regional Educational Officer (REO), making a total of 193 participants. The study employed purposeful and simple random sampling procedures. Data was collected through interviews, documentary reviews, and questionnaires. Quantitative data were analysed using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient and qualitative data were analysed using content and thematic approach. The results indicate that although ESQA plays a significant role in the improvement of instructional practices in secondary schools, however, statistically, the results indicate that there was no significant relationship between ESQA practices and HoSs and teachers' instructional leadership improvement in secondary education. It was also found that the ESQA reports and recommendations were not implemented by the respective authorities to bring about effective improvement of the instructional process. ESQ assurers evaluated the performance of HoS based on administrative roles and teachers' professional documents whereas classroom observations were not effectively carried out. The results further indicate that HoSs and teachers needed professional support to improve instructional practices. The key argument in this paper is that if secondary schools have to improve the quality of teaching and learning through instructional practices, ESQ assurers need to support the HoSs and teachers professionally. For this to be a reality, the government needs to commit its resources for the training programmes to the Department of ESQA, and classroom observation needs to be a central focus of the ESQ assurers to improve the teaching and learning in secondary school education.

**Key words:** External school quality assurance; External school quality assurers; Heads of Schools; Instructional leadership; Teaching and learning

## **1 Introduction**

There is a common agreement at the global level that External School Quality Assurance (ESQA) is one of the most useful tools for creating an effective teaching and learning environment (Aguti, 2015; Chika, 2019; Ehren & Shackleton, 2016; Farrell, 2011; Fungilwa,

2021; Wilcox, 2000). ESQA is a kind of management, which involves systematic monitoring, evaluating, regulating, and reporting of educational programs and practices to ensure that acceptable standards are attained and maintained (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2016). According to FME, ESQA is a dynamic process that provides guidance and support to Heads of Schools (HoSs) and teachers for improved student learning outcomes. ESQA emerged from the school inspection that was introduced under the Napoleons government in France during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Adewale, 2014). The idea spread to other European countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (De Grauwe, 2007). As indicated by Wilcox (2000), the United Kingdom (UK) carried out its first school inspection services for quality assurance control in 1839 under Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI).

Many African countries adopted the ESQA services under the name of school inspection after independence (De-Grauwe, 2007). In Zanzibar, for example, ESQA has been one of the government agencies under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training [MoEVT] (Office of the Chief Inspector of Education [OCIE], 2018). Previously, was the legal basis for the inspection of schools Part No.VI of the Education Act, No. 6, 1982 (MoEVT, 2018). Now, it is known as the Office of the Chief Inspector of Education according to Act, No 10 of 2018 (OCIE, 2018). Through this Act, ESQ assurers need to promote the improvement of the quality of education provided in schools. It is also a means of holding schools, HoSs, and teachers accountable for the quality of education, monitoring and supervising the implementation of the curriculum, and informing the MoEVT and other stakeholders about the quality of education provided in schools (De Grauwe, 2007; OCIE, 2018, Matete, 2021). The Act affirms that the OCIE has to monitor the provision of education through SQA the performance of both HoSs and teachers to ensure the achievement of quality teaching and learning in schools (MoEVT, 2018).

ESQA has been acknowledged for promoting HoSs and teachers' instructional practices and student learning (Chika, 2019; Fungilwa, 2021; Saeed, 2018; Wong & Li, 2010). However, most of these previous works concentrated on the effectiveness of school-based evaluation. The recent study by Fungilwa (2021) in Tanzania was concerned with Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) and many studies have been conducted on school inspection. See for example, Matete (2009), Alkutich (2015), Ali (2019), Ali (2021), Haule (2012) and Kambuga and Dadi (2015). Literature on ESQA is scanty, and for the Tanzanian context, it has been a new wave after changing the name from school inspection. The hope has been that school quality assurers may act in a more humanistic and friendly way, unlike the previous system where school inspectors were viewed as strangers to schools and fault finders. This study investigated the influence of the ESQA on instructional leadership practices in improving teaching and learning in Zanzibar. The key question was: To what extent do ESQA practices influence the HoSs and teachers' instructional leadership and practices for the improvement of teaching and learning in secondary schools? The study did not investigate the ESQA for the school infrastructure and financial resources, although they also play an essential role in improving the quality of education.

## **2 Why ESQA in Education system?**

The establishment of the ESQA system in different countries has multi-dimensional purposes. The main goal is to monitor and evaluate the curriculum implementation, provision of professional support to HoSs and teachers, offer feedback and recommendations and foster HoSs and teachers' accountability for students' learning.

### *2.1 ESQA for monitoring the curriculum implementation through classroom observation*

The establishment of the ESQA system intends to monitor, assess, and evaluate the status of the ongoing school programmes that is, how far a set of objectives given by the government are being met (Farrell, 2011). Monitoring determines the level of performance of HoSs, teachers, students, and the whole school administration (Tesema, 2014). ESQ assurers are responsible for performing activities such as supervising and evaluating the quality of school instruction monitoring, and school organisation and management (Kambuga & Dadi, 2015).

It has been acknowledged that classroom observation is the proper way of monitoring and evaluating the quality of education provided in schools as it gives the EQA team first-hand information about what goes on in the classroom (Alkutch, 2015; Chika, 2019). Farrell (2011) and Agut (2015) state that classroom observation is a means of monitoring and evaluating teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The main aim is to improve the teachers' efficiency and effectiveness when teaching content delivery. Thus, classroom observation is very important for the improvement of students' learning and achievement (MoEVT, 2009).

### *2.2. ESQA for provision of professional support to HoSs and teachers*

ESQ assurers are expected to provide professional support to teachers by helping them with pedagogical skills to improve the teaching and learning techniques, mastery of the subject, preparation of schemes of work and lesson plans, and content presentation (DES, 2016; Patrick, 2009; Sivonike, 2010). According to Matete (2009), ESQ assurers have to work with teachers as friends and not enemies. Matete (2021) also recommended that if teachers are to improve professionally then, professional support to teachers is a necessary evil. According to Matete, professional support to teachers on how to teach difficult topics will be an added value of the EQA in schools. Chika (2019) further, suggests that for countries to have an internalisation of education, ESQA systems to be embraced.

### *2.3 Enhancing HoSs and teachers' accountability for students' learning*

ESQA indirectly influences teachers' accountability for teaching (Mwambapa, 2016). As observed by Chika (2019), the ESQA system is also necessary for improving the school's effectiveness. ESQA ensures need to ensure that the standards in education are upheld for teachers' accountability for their teaching (Machumu, 2012). Countries such as England and Wiles, the Netherlands, and Hong Kong use ESQA as an instrument for maintaining quality which has the dual purpose of enhancing teachers' accountability for students' learning (Wong and Li, 2010). Greatbatch and Tate (2019) reported that countries such as England, Estonia, Germany, Singapore, and Taiwan demonstrated higher performance in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) examinations of 2015 because they use a centralised education system in quality control. However, as suggested by De Grauwe (2007), ESQ assurers as educational supervisors have to work closely with teachers if the aim is to improve students' learning. Matete (2021) also recommends that to improve teachers' commitment and accountability for students' learning, ESQ assurers need to have close supervision of teachers in the classroom setting.

### *2.4 Provision of feedback and recommendations*

The whole process of school evaluation, reporting, and feedback mechanisms is very important for effective communication and school improvement (Mwambapa, 2016; Saeed, 2018). ESQ assurers are obliged to provide feedback to schools, the government, and educational stakeholders on how to improve the education system and the status of the

curriculum implementation (Lupimo, 2014). ESQ assurers also need to give advice to teachers after the classroom observation on areas of weaknesses so that teachers can improve their teaching. Because HoSs are the ISQA in the school context setting, they also need to observe teaching and learning in the classroom and give feedback to the teachers timely (Ampofo, 2019; Muksin, 2015).

### **3 Research methodology**

#### *3.1. Research approach and design*

A mixed research approach was employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed research approach helped to complement each other and off set the weaknesses of each approach. A combination of the two approaches is believed to neutralise the flaw of each approach to increase the trustworthiness and reliability of the results. Mixed research method, gives a broader picture of the data collected as it capitalises the strengths of both approaches. All the data on influence of the EQA practices on the HoSs and teachers' instructional leadership practices towards the improvement of teaching and learning in secondary schools were presented quantitatively. Data on teachers' perception on SQA practices in monitoring their work performance in secondary schools were presented qualitatively. Data were triangulated from different sources of information and quantitative data were presented first and supported by qualitative ones. A convergent parallel design was adopted for the corroboration and validation of the results. Both quantitative and qualitative were concurrently collected and analysed and they received equal value and weight (Creswell & Plano, 2011). However, balancing between quantitative and qualitative findings is difficult and sometimes it is time-consuming, especially when seeking clarification of the issues at hand. It was necessary, therefore, to ensure that questions were to be clear to avoid wastage of time.

#### *3.2 Area of study, sample and sampling techniques*

The study was carried out at Kaskazini Region in Unguja in Zanzibar. Zanzibar was selected because in the years 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 consecutively it was reported that classroom supervision and observations were inappropriately carried out (Office of the Chief Inspectorate of Zanzibar, 2019). Similarly, the school performance was also unsatisfactory (MoEVT, 2019). It was necessary, therefore, to investigate how ESQA can influence instructional leadership and practices that in turn may improve students' learning and achievement. The sample was selected purposefully and by using the simple random sampling techniques. REOs, DEOs, School Quality assurers and HoSs were selected purposefully as it was believed that they had the needed information. Teachers were selected randomly because they were the main target group and they needed equal representation in the study. However, it was necessary to ensure that both female and male teachers were to be involved in the study. The study involved 167 teachers, who are the main implementers of the curriculum and were randomly selected, 11 ESQ assurers because they are the ones who need to visit the schools and help the teachers in instructional practices, 12 HoSs as ISQ assurers who need to support their fellow teachers on the proper ways of implementing the curriculum, 2 DEOs and REO with a total number of 193 participants. HoSs, ESQ assures, DEOs and REO were purposively selected due to their leadership positions.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and documentary review.

#### *3.4.1 Questionnaires*

Close-ended questionnaires were distributed to the teachers to collect data on the ESQA and its influence on instructional leadership practices in secondary schools. It was possible to collect a huge amount of data from a large number of respondents (Abawi, 2014). Questionnaires are also useful and convenient for collecting specific and focused information from a large sample (McLeod, 2018). It also gives freedom of thought as the individual participant can just fill up them with his/her own choice. Close-ended questionnaires were employed to collect quantitative data and open-ended questionnaires were employed to collect the qualitative data. The prepared questionnaires were reviewed by the supervisors and then were refined. The questionnaires were pre-tested by fellow students to check if the questions were answering the questions at hand and could help to achieve the research objectives. It took a month to collect the data but with intensive follow-ups by the help of 2 assistant researchers. Some research participants preferred to remain with them and thus, it was sometimes very demanding to ensure that they were collected. Some research participants kept promising of bringing the questionnaires back. Quantitative data were based on the statement such as “*External quality assurers provide professional development and support to your HoS when they visit your school*”, and they had to respond in likert scales by choosing one response from Strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, Agree and Strongly agree. Qualitative data questions were as follows: How many times do quality assurers visit your school per academic year? What strategies do quality assurers use during the inspection exercise? What procedures do the quality assurers follow to ensure quality assurance helps to improve teaching and learning in the classroom? What are the things that quality assurers place more emphasis when they visit your school? Although a questionnaire survey is a convenient method of data collection, however, the possibility of skipping questions is high because sometimes some questions may be disregarded, or left unanswered (Debos, 2019). Sometimes when are mailed, the return rate is low. It was necessary, therefore, to administer them in person at school.

#### *3.4.2 In-depth interviews*

An in-depth interview was also used to collect the required data from the participants. An in-depth interview includes interviewees' protocols and predetermined questions. It allowed the ESQA, HoSs, DEOs, and REO to freely share and express their experiences, views, feelings, and opinions on how teaching and learning could be improved (Abawi, 2014). The interview questions like the questionnaires were pre-tested to the supervisor and fellow students. Each interview lasted for about 30-45 minutes, and it took place in private room, where no one could interfere the conversation and it was the researcher who interviewed the study participants. During the interviews, audios were recorded from what the interviewees said in Kiswahili and later were translated in English language and supplemented by intensive notes taking. Interviews, however, have the weakness of being time-consuming and involving a small number of participants. Clarity of the questions and ensuring that participants are within the line of the issue in question were important to save time and get the intended information.

#### *3.4.3 Documentary review*

Different institutional documents were reviewed in this study such as ESQA forms, the ISQA forms, and the Office of the Chief Inspector of Education Act No. 10 of 2018 of SQA, examination reports, and ESQA framework. Journal articles and academic reports were also reviewed for gaining a deeper understanding of the SQA practices and instructional leadership practices. Documentary review is, however, time-consuming (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). Sometimes, some documents are old and sometimes reflect the context in which they were prepared. It was, necessary, therefore, to sort out and include the most relevant documents even if they were old.

### 3.5. Data analysis and ethical issues

Data were analysed using inferential statistics i.e., Spearman's rho correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between the ESQA and HoSs instructional leadership practices. Descriptive statistical analysis was also employed to calculate the frequencies and percentage of all responses from the questionnaires while qualitative data were analysed thematically by using voices to cement what was gathered through questionnaires in narrative forms using Braun and Clarke (2006) procedures such as reading, and re-reading the transcript, generating initial codes, coding, creating, review, define themes, and write up. All research ethical issues were observed by obtaining the research clearance from the university. All participants had to consent to be involved in the study freely and were also free to decide to withdraw their participation whenever they would wish to. All the materials were cited either by giving a direct quote or paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism.

## 4 Results

This section presents three key findings from the study. These include issues related to classroom observation, ESQ assurers provision of professional support to teachers, and provision of feedback on the strengths and weaknesses to teachers after classroom observation.

### 4.1 Classroom observation

Respondents were asked about their understanding of ESQA practices and their influence on instructional leadership practices in secondary schools. The results indicated that the correlation coefficient of classroom observation between ESQ assurers and HoSs was  $r=-0.020$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.8$ . These results indicated that there was a negative correlation between ESQ assurers and HoSs in carrying out classroom observation. There was also no statistical significance between the two variables (Table 1).

Table 1: Correlation between the ESQ assurers and HoSs classroom observation practice

		ESQ assurers observe teachers while they are teaching in the classroom	HoSs make classroom observation and evaluate strengths and weakness of his/her teachers
ESQ assurers observe teachers while they are teaching in the classroom	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1.000 . 167	-.020 .801 167
HoSs makes classroom observation and evaluate strengths and weakness of his/her teachers	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.020 .801 167	1.000 . 167

Source: Field data (2021)

During the interviews, the results indicated that ESQ assurers visited the classrooms occasionally and many times used to check the teachers' professional documents such as schemes of work, teachers' logbooks, lesson plans, and students' exercise books without helping the teachers professionally. For example, one of the HoSs at school 'B' responded:

The ESQ assurers visit the classrooms sometimes and they mainly concentrate on the assessment of schemes of work coverage, lesson plans, logbooks, and students' exercise books. We need professional support on how to teach specific subjects that could add value for the improvement of instructional practices in schools (**Interview with HoS 'B' 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021**).

The data gathered through an interview session with the ESQ assurers also supported the above findings. One of the ESQ assures '2' commented on the issues related to classroom observation:

To be honest, HoSs reports indicated that they do not visit the classroom often. However, they carry out observation after every three months. What they continuously do is that they check the preparation for teaching in general, pupils' exercise books, and whether all lessons are covered (**Interview with ESQ assurers '2' 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021**).

From the findings above it is indicated that ESQA practices helped the HoSs practices and contributed effectively to teachers' instructional performance. However, the findings indicated that many ESQ assurers tended to carry out the classroom observations even though the HoSs were infrequently doing so. HoSs focused more on administration duties and as a result, they overlooked their instructional leadership activities, especially classroom observation.

#### 4.2 ESQ assurers provision of professional support to teachers

The findings indicated that the correlation coefficient of ESQ assurers and HoSs in the provision of professional support to teachers was  $r = -0.088$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.257$ . This indicated that there was a negative correlation between ESQ assurers and HoSs in the way they offer professional support to teachers. On other words, it indicates that there was no statistical significance between the two variables (Table 2).

Table 2: ESQ assures' and HoSs provision of professional supports.

	ESQ assurers provide professional development and support to HoSs	HoSs provide professional support and make sure teaching and learning
ESQ assurers provide professional development and support to HoSs	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.257

when they visit to school	N	167	167
HoSs provide different kind of professional support to make sure teaching and learning	Correlation Coefficient	-.088	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.257	.
	N	167	167

Source: Field data (2021)

However, during the interview, the findings indicated that ESQ assurers did not properly support HoSs in carrying out instructional supervision and ISQA. One of the HoSs at school 'E' had this to say:

We once received training on how to use the new QA forms. Although they also check the lesson plans and schemes and recommend or instruct us where we have challenges, it is not enough because they do not help us professionally how to teach a specific subject (**Interview with HoS 'E' 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021**).

During the interview session, the ESQ assurers also supported that HoSs helped the teachers professionally. One of the ESQ assurers '4' stated:

To be frank, many schools tend to use subject panel meetings to help teachers solve challenges in teaching. Thus, HoSs also have started using subject clubs and panels to assist teachers to solve the challenges they face (**Interview with ESQ assurers '4' 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021**).

These findings indicated that ESQA practices contributed to the improvement of teaching and learning. However, such professional support by the ESQ assurers was not enough to help both HoSs and teachers to improve to a better quality of teaching and learning. The study also found that most HoSs did not provide professional support to the teachers although they tried to have some subject clubs where teachers could help each other among themselves. It is possibly because of a lack of knowledge and skills since some HoSs are just assigned the headship responsibilities without training.

#### 4.3 Provision of feedback on the strengths and weaknesses

The findings indicated that the correlation coefficient of the ESQ assurers and HoSs in the provision of feedback was  $r = -0.131$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.091$ . These findings indicated that there were negative correlations between ESQ assurers and HoSs on how they provide feedback to the teachers. In other words is that there was no statistical significance between the two variables, based on the above negativity in the relationship (Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation between ESQ assurers and HoSs provision of feedback to teachers

		ESQ assurers monitor curriculum and assess students learning	ESQ assurers monitor curriculum and assess students learning	HoSs provide feedback to teachers timely
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000		-.131
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.		.091



regularly and provide feedback to teachers timely	N	167	167
HoSs	Correlation		
monitor curriculum	Coefficient	-.131	1.000
and assess students	Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	.
learning regularly and provide feedback to teachers timely	N	167	167

*Source:* Field data (2021)

The data gathered through an interview session with HoSs also confirmed the above findings. It was revealed that ESQ assurers used to provide feedback and recommendations to them. In this context, HoSs at school ‘E’ was frank enough to say:

The ESQA reports are given timely. However, implementation of the recommendations does not take place to a large extent because the teachers take it easy. Teachers do not care for them and they really do not show that they are committed to work on the comments based on their weaknesses (**Interview with HoS ‘E’ 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021**).

The data gathered through interviews with ESQ assures also supported the above findings. For example, ESQ assurer ‘3’ had the following to say:

The HoSs do not give their internal SQA reports to the ESQ assurers. They also do not implement the recommendations from the ESQ assurers since we do not get any feedback from them. If you go to a school for a follow-up, you are considered an enemy. All these emerge because they are not held accountable to the concerned authority (**Interview with ESQ assurer ‘3’ on 3<sup>th</sup> July 2021**).

Generally, the findings indicated that ESQ assurers provided reports and recommendations in time though some teachers complained that those ESQA reports were impractical. The findings, therefore, imply that there was no guarantee that the provision of feedback and recommendations to the teachers could be properly implemented by both the ESQ assurers and the HoSs. The implementation of recommendations needs teachers’ commitment and skills which in most cases tend to be lacking among the HoSs and teachers.

## 5 Discussion of the findings

The study revealed that while ESQA practices have a great influence on HoSs instructional leadership and on the teachers’ instructional practices as they promote the effectiveness and efficiency in teaching and learning, however, from the results, it was evident that the practices of the ESQ assurers and the HoSs indicated no significant relationship. The findings are in line with that of Tesema (2014) who also found that there was no relationship between school-based supervision practices and continuous teachers’ professional improvement. Hence, it may be concluded that the HoSs were not satisfied with ESQA practices that were expected to contribute to their continuous instructional leadership improvement.

It was also found that classroom observation was not sometimes carried out by the ESQ assurers and their evaluation of the teachers’ work performance was based on teachers’

preparation of the professional documents. These findings concur with those of Alkutchi (2015) in Dubai, who stated that it was obvious that sometimes ESQ assurers did not carry out classroom observation for some subjects or even for all teachers in a school. Matete (2021) found the same in her study in Tanzania that ESQA focused on professional documents to evaluate the work of the teachers such as lesson plans, schemes of work, and pupils' exercise books. To Matete this may not help the ESQ assures understand thoroughly how teachers teach and are committed to the instructional processes. As suggested by Aguti (2015), for the ESQA to influence students' learning, classroom observation needs to be conducted as part of the quality control in schools.

The results again indicated that ESQ assurers helped HoSs and teachers to improve teaching and learning. However, it was found that teachers required more support on how to teach specific subjects. These results negate the suggestions given by Sivonike (2010) in Tanzania, who state that ESQA is essential for the professional development of HoSs and teachers for improving teaching and learning. Ehren and Visscher (2008), consider ESQA as a mechanism to help teachers to grow in their professional careers. On the other hand, Ehren and Visscher found that lack of in-service training and support for ESQ assurers affected the improvement of the quality of education in the Netherlands. As observed by Saeed (2018) in Iraq, HoSs also needed more support to teach difficult topics as they felt to be hindrances to the improvement of teaching and learning.

The results further indicated that ESQ assurers' reports and recommendations helped HoSs and teachers in improving their instructional practices. These results concur with those of Ehren and Shackleton (2016) in the Netherlands, who suggested that ESQ assurers need to provide feedback based on strengths and weaknesses for teachers to improve their instructional practices. However, it was found in this study that ESQ assurers' recommendations were not taken into consideration by responsible authorities. As a result, the weaknesses remained as usual, and thereafter it hampered the process of teaching and learning. These results are also in line with that of Lupimo (2014) in Tanzania who found that the recommendations provided by ESQ assurers were not implemented accordingly by respective authorities, and thus schools continued performing poorly in the National Examinations. These results are further supported by Matete's (2009) study in Tanzania who commented that if the recommendations and the ESQA reports are not acted upon by respective authorities then, visiting the schools is meaningless and it demoralises the ESQ assurers because they are likely to find the same problems when visiting schools again. These findings again support the suggestions given by Mwambapa (2016) in Tanzania, who stated that if ESQ assurers' reports and recommendations are not implemented, the same weaknesses will continue to exist and thus affecting school efficiency and effectiveness.

## **6 Conclusion and recommendations**

This study investigated the ESQA and its influence on instructional leadership practices in secondary school education in Zanzibar. The results indicated that although ESQA plays a significant role in the improvement of instructional practices in secondary schools, statistically, however, it appeared that there was no significant relationship between ESQA practices and HoSs and teachers' instructional leadership practices improvement in secondary education. The results also indicated that the ESQA reports and recommendations were not implemented by the respective authorities to bring about effective improvement of the instructional process. It was again found that ESQ assurers evaluated the performance of HoS

based on administrative roles and teachers' professional documents whereas classroom observations were not effectively carried out. The findings indicated further that HoSs and teachers needed professional support to improve the instructional practices in their schools.

It is important that ESQ assurers and HoSs engage in actual classroom observations to discern the strengths and weaknesses of teachers for proper support for them to improve teaching and learning. MoEVTZ needs to consider the provision of appropriate and continuous training programmes for the ESQ assurers to equip them with the necessary professional skills and support teachers. HoSs need also to develop school action plans to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the SQA reports and recommendations. There is also a need for MoEVTZ to appoint and recruit ESQ assurers based on merits and capability on leadership and management skills, appropriate qualifications, and experience in the subject area and not based on seniority alone. This, in one way or another, may not only help the SQA practices have added value to teachers but also improve the school's effectiveness and efficiency, students' learning and achievement.

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