The Degeneration of Quality Assurance Functions to Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

The concept of degeneration which means taking services closer to wananchi (citizens) has gained momentum since the promulgation of the current constitution of Kenya in the year 2010. The functions of Directorate Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) which fall under the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) are supposed to be devolved and institutionalized in schools as indicated in article 70 of the Basic Education Act, No. 14 of 2013. This study endeavoured to establish teachers' perceived expectations and challenges on devolution of quality assurance functions to schools and revealed that instructional supervision and leadership functions should be devolved to schools whereas in-service training and management of facilities functions should not be devolved to schools. Financial constrains, inadequate skills to handle the quality assurance and standards functions and frosty relationships between teachers were some of the challenges that would be experienced if the functions were devolved to schools.

Key words: Quality Assurance Functions, Degeneration, Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, Schools

Introduction

Across the world, quality assurance (QA) is an indispensable system that ensures quality education is offered in schools. It involves instituting checks and balances to make certain that teachers and schools are teaching the prescribed curriculum appropriately and learners' progressive outcomes are appealing (Allais, 2009). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2014) defines quality education as one that satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living. The World Bank Report (1997) describes quality education as that which comprise vital in puts such as sufficient classrooms, safe water for consumption, toilet facilities, adequate instructional materials and in-service training of teachers. United Nations Children's Fund (2000) indicates that quality

education includes: Learners who are healthy; well- nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace; processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; and outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. Ngware, Oketch and Ezeh (2011) contend that quality education comprises three interrelated aspects: Quality of human and material resources available for teaching (inputs); quality of teaching practice (process); and the quality of results (outputs and outcomes). Odhiambo (2008) opines that quality education is determined by the inputs such as curriculum content, instructional materials and equipment, school culture, teacher pupil ratio, costs and guiding policies, quality assurance, learning duration and above all the quality of the teachers and management functions. Quality education may also be defined as the degree or grade of excellence in matters of learning and instruction reflected through the academic achievement.

Provision of QA in Africa is hampered due to inadequate capacity to provide effective school supervision. Usually supervision conducted in schools focuses on administrative, rather than pedagogical issues (The World Bank Report, 2007). Where supervision occurs, it can have positive impact on student learning, reduce teacher absences, increase in student attendance, improve teaching, and better flow of information to central authorities (Warwick, Reimers, and Mc Ginn, 1992). Osman and Mukuna (2013) assert that internal quality assessments are critical to the achievement of required knowledge, skills and competence amongst learners.

In Kenya, the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) is empowered to carry out supervision and ensure that quality education is being offered in schools (Ojiambo, 2009). The DQAS is composed of officers known as Quality Assurance and Standards Officers or QASOs as they are commonly referred to (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2010). According to Ajuoga, Indoshi and Agak (2010), a QASO is an education officer responsible for supervision of curriculum implementation in schools and enhancing teachers' effectiveness. In other words, QASOs are required to provide external scrutiny on how the curricula are being implemented at the school level (Gongera, Muigai and Nyakwara, 2013). QASOs are therefore mandated vide the Basic Education Act, No. 14 of 2013 to enter any basic education and training institution with or without notice to ensure compliance with education standards and regulation. Their roles entail: Advising the government on the type and quality of education being offered in the country; advising the government on curriculum delivery, learning and teaching materials, leadership, staffing, governance, discipline, curriculum training of teachers and institutional

development plans; assisting the quality development service with the design of in-service training programme; monitoring and advising on standards in education based on all round standard performance; advising on the identification, selection and promotion of teachers and advisors in collaboration with Teachers Service Commission (MoEST 2000).

Various studies undertaken have found out that provision of QA is impeded by QASOs inadequacy of relevant skills and competencies to add value to the quality and standards of education; dearth of personnel; limited resources, such as funds and equipment; inadequate transportation or flexibility; sporadic visitations; and insufficient feedback and follow-up to schools on supervisory issues (JICA & IDCJ, 2012; MoE, 2012; Ogamba, 2011; and Wanzare, 2012). This consequently has necessitated call for the strengthening and revitalizing of DQAS (Chepkuto, 2012). The government has responded to this need by enacting law which empowers every institution of basic education and training to develop or adapt appropriate standards, establish, implement and manage QA systems and establish systems and processes for continuous review and improvement of standards and QA (Republic of Kenya, 2013). This study will therefore strive to find out teachers' perceived expectations and challenges on devolution of QA functions to schools.

Quality Assurance Functions in Schools

Sallis (2002) opines that quality assurance (QA) is a procedure done before and during the event process concerned to prevent faults occurring in the first place. QA is therefore a means of producing defect-and fault-free products. It is about consistently meeting product specification or getting things right first time, every time. Gudo and Olel (2011) contend that QA in education refers to mechanisms by which an institution assures itself and stakeholders that it shall achieve the standards it has negotiated and agreed on. Ayeni (2012) postulates that QA in education is efficient management, monitoring, evaluation and reviews of the resource inputs and transformation process (teaching and learning) to produce quality outputs (pupils) that meet set standards and expectations of the society. According to Gongera, Muigai and Nyakwara (2013), QA in education is concerned with quality development of teaching and learning materials, provision of advisory services and provision of opportunities for staff development. QA ensures continuous improvement by maintaining conventional standards while following laid down policies in education (MoE, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the researchers will focus on instructional supervision, in-service training, instructional leadership and management school facilities QA functions (MoE, 2010).

Instructional supervision

Wanzare (2012) refers instructional supervision as quality assurance practice put in place by the QASOs and school administration to monitor the teaching and learning process in the school, and is a way of checking other people's work to ensure that bureaucratic regulations and

procedures are followed and that loyalty to the higher authorities is maintained. Awuah-Baffour (2011) opines that instructional supervision deals with monitoring teachers' instruction-related duties, providing teachers with teaching resource, visiting classrooms to observe lessons, and providing assistance and support to help teachers do their work effectively. Okumbe (1987) opines that instructional supervision is concerned with the pupil or the student learning in the classroom. Ayeni (2012) contends that instructional supervision roles performed by supervisors include; monitoring of teachers' attendance during lessons, checking and ensuring adequate preparation of lesson notes, checking and ensuring adequacy of scheme of work and record of work. However, instructional supervision is faced with challenges such as delay in releasing teachers' observation reports, fault finding mentality during classroom visitation, lack of discussion of lessons with teachers after the visit, laxity in teacher preparation and record keeping, untimed and unstructured teaching notes and incomprehensive schemes of work (Sibanda, Mutopa and Maphosa 2011).

In-Service training
Over the years, there have been attempts to devolve in-service training (INSET) in Kenya through institutionalization (Bunyi, Wangia, Magoma and Limboro, 2013). INSET programs are professional development programs committed to improve educator functions and grow their facilitation skills. It is through INSET that educational institutions realize multiple goals, ranging from training teachers in the use of the latest technology, to helping them grow their skills in implementing pedagogical best functions, and sometimes even aiding educators as they innovate in pursuit of improved educational outcomes (Gathumbi, Mungai and Hintze, 2013). Osman and Mukuna (2013) opine that INSET is undertaken because learning is a lifelong pursuit and aimed at improving the quality of education. Ogamba (2011) on his study about the role of QASOs in enhancing primary school teachers' effectiveness in Marani district, Kenya, indicated that 61.67% of the teachers reported that QASOs do not conduct training of teachers on the current curriculum to alleviate problem of poor subject mastery and dismal performance. This was attributed to inadequate capacity development of QASOs to enable them discharge their mandate effectively and inadequacy of their numbers to expedite INSET task. A study also carried out by Ajuoga, Indoshi and Agak (2010) on perception of QASOs about their competence: implications for training, showed that supervisors needed a training programme and ranked in order of preference of training needs as follows; supervisory skills, curriculum evaluation, action research, guidance and counseling, human relations, communication skills, report writing skills, management of instructional materials, knowledge of information technology, and special needs education respectively.

Instructional leadership
Van Deventer and Kruger (2003) opine that instructional leadership is composed of five major components namely: defining the school mission, managing the curriculum and instruction, organizing teaching, monitoring learners' progress and promotion of instructional climate.

Okumbe (1987) postulates that instructional leadership entails helping teachers develop syllabi, curriculum guides, purposeful units of instructions and lesson plans in order to improve schools academic performance. An instructional leader in this case is a figure head in the school who establishes the school's academic goals, provides motivation to the educators and learners, supports the educators with the needed instructional resources, communicates high performance expectations to the educators, designs policies and procedures by which to promote teaching and learning at schools (Smith, Sparts and Thurlow 2001 as cited in Bell (2007). According to Olembo, Wanga and Karagu, (1992) an instructional leader is expected to possess a superior knowledge about curriculum and instruction and provide expert leadership in all areas of school programme focusing on improving teaching and learning, developing supervisory strategies, executing strategies for improvement, maintaining the school system, improving curriculum and library materials, evaluating pupils progress and time-tabling. Mbiti (1974) contends that in order for the instructional leaders to succeed in performance of their roles, they must make the school's purpose clear to everyone, to see that the necessary equipment and monetary resources are available for school use, and to motivate the staff, pupils and parents to produce a lively school spirit as well as excellence in work performance. Awuah-Baffour (2011) opine that praising teachers for specific teaching behaviour, establishing open and trusting relationship with teachers and treating teachers with respect and care as very crucial instructional leadership skills.

Management of school facilities

Nwangwu (1997) posits that for efficient educational management, facilities help the school to determine the number of pupils to be accommodated, number of teachers and non-teaching personnel to be employed and the cost determination for the efficient management of the system. Olutola (2000) contends that the school environment affects academic achievement of pupils. Facilities such as school buildings, desks, seats, chalkboard, teaching aids, and cupboard are ingredients for effective teaching and learning. Onyango (2001) portends that facilities should be regularly and frequently inspected or checked for any possible hazards. Any hazards to the students' health or safety should be eliminated immediately. Resources especially buildings and facilities are of considerable investment of public funds and maintenance is essential to protect this investment. Renovation, painting and repair of older school buildings should be done to bring them up to prolong the life span of equipment (Bakhada, 2004). Stakeholders should be keenly aware of fire and other safety issues. They should work to make the school environment as safe as possible and should be aware of procedures in the event of an emergency for example, a staff member should be designated to supervise and manage fire protection at the school, emergency exits should be clearly marked, doors correctly hung and alternative escape routes should be available (Ayaga, 2010).

Methodology

This study utilized descriptive survey design. This is because it provides room for sampling of people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Orodho, 2009). The target population consisted of (M.Ed) students (teachers) who were attending institutional based studies at Kenyatta University (KU) during April holiday. In this case, fifteen Master of Education (M.Ed) students in the department of Education Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies (EMPCS) were purposively sampled. This group was chosen because these teachers came from all regions of the country and was therefore representative of the entire population. A questionnaire with closed and open ended items was used. Face validity was used to measure the validity of the instrument. The senior members of academic staff at the department of EMPCS at KU checked through the questionnaire to ensure that test items like the opinion of the subjects on content, language use and clarity covered all the vital areas of the study. A test-retest method was also used to test the reliability by administering the instrument to two M.Ed students who were not included in the actual study. Data were analysed and results presented in form of tables, figures, frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out teachers' perceived expectations and challenges on devolution of QA functions to schools. To achieve these objectives, significant aspects of quality assurance functions were examined in the realm of: Instructional supervision; in-service training; instructional leadership; and management of school facilities.

Instructional supervision

Instructional supervision is a critical QA function as it provides for checks and balances to ensure that teachers prepare their teaching instruments appropriately. It also deals with advising teachers to undertake their work expeditiously.

Table 1. Devolving QA instructional supervision function to schools

Teachers		
QA instructional supervision function	**n**	**%**
Yes	09	60.0
No	06	40.0
Total	15	100.0

According to table 1 above on whether to devolve QA instructional supervision function to schools, 60.0% of the teachers recommended devolution of the function to schools. They supported their position by indicating that devolving of instructional supervision function will mitigate issues of sporadic supervision, insufficient preparation of teaching and learning materials, inadequate updating of professional records by teachers, teachers and pupils indiscipline and shaky rapport between teachers and QASOs. 40.0% indicated that they do not

support devolution of the function to schools. They cited inadequate skills and time by the teachers to undertake the exercise.

In-service training

In-service training enables teachers to keep abreast with emerging knowledge and skills which are important to their work. The skills and competences acquired through INSET are crucial in ameliorating schools' academic achievement. Table 2. Devolving QA In-service training function to schools

Teachers		
QA in-service training function	**n**	**%**
Yes	03	20.0
No	12	80.0
Total	15	100.0

Table 2 above indicates that 80.0% of the respondents did not support in-service training to be devolved to schools. They felt that teachers did not have the capacity to handle teacher development programmes. They also cited teachers' undue rivalry as reasons for their position. 20.0% respondents approved that QA in-service training function be devolved to schools because teachers are the professionals on the ground who understand curriculum dynamics than anybody else.

Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership is an inner force in teachers' driven by school goals to accomplish curriculum and instruction task. This function thrives in an environment which recognizes proper planning and systematic execution of activities.

Table 3. Devolving QA instructional leadership function to schools

Teachers		
QA instructional leadership function	**n**	**%**
Yes	14	93.3
No	01	06.7
Total	15	100.0

Table 3 above shows that 93.3 % respondents supported instructional leadership to be devolved to schools. They perceived instructional leadership as a propeller of all activities in the schools. However, 06.7% did not support devolution of instructional leadership function.

Management of school facilities

Efficient management facilities influence academic performance of schools. Proper maintenance is paramount for desired results to be accrued. Constant assessment is also

essential for safety purposes.

Table 4. Devolving QA management of school facilities function to schools

Teachers		
QA management of school facilities function	**n**	**%**
Yes	05	33.3
No	10	66.7
Total	15	100.0

Table 4 above illustrates that 66.7 % respondents disapproved management of school facilities to be devolved to schools. They felt that school safety systems might be compromised and lead to several catastrophes. In addition they recommended regular inspection of school facilities as part of larger management strategy. 33.3 % supported devolution of the function. They indicated that schools' administration have requisite capacities to manage their facilities.

Challenges to be experienced if QA functions were devolved to schools
Rarely a programme mounted in an institution may run through inherently without challenges. Devolving of QA function is a programme recommended to take effect in Kenyan schools and might face challenges too.

Table 5. Challenges teachers would experience if QA functions were devolved to schools

Teachers		
Challenges	**n**	**%**
Financial constraints	15	100
Inadequate skills to handle functions	12	80
Frosty relationships between teachers	7	46.66

Table 5 above shows that the major challenges to be experienced if QA functions were to be devolved to schools include: financial constraints; inadequate skills to handle QA tasks; and frosty relationship among teachers.

Discussion
Instructional supervision is a vital strategy used to monitor the teaching and learning process in the school. It involves classroom visitations to assess lesson delivery by teachers, checking preparation of professional instruments such as schemes of work, lesson plans, records of work covered and above all mentoring teachers. Respondents supported this function to be devolved to schools due to QASOs challenges such as delay in releasing teachers' observation reports, fault finding mentality during classroom visitation, lack of discussion of lessons with teachers after the visit (Ogamba, 2011; and Sibanda, Mutopa and Maphosa 2011). Perhaps peer teacher instructional supervision will motivate teachers to undertake their academic duties expeditiously. Ergo, there is need to empower and encourage teachers to share knowledge and

skills for the benefit of students and themselves.

In-service training (INSET) is staff development programmes offered to teachers with an objective of ameliorating their skills and knowledge in tandem with curriculum in force. According to the respondents this function should not be devolved to schools because teachers lacked sufficient capacity to mount the programmes. This therefore implies that competent facilitators be invite who are well conversant with primary school curriculum so that teachers can benefit immensely. Gathumbi, Mungai and Hintze (2013) have opined that INSET enable educational institutions realize multiple goals, ranging from training teachers in the use of the latest technology to helping them grow their skills in implementing pedagogical best functions, and sometimes even aiding educators as they innovate in pursuit of improved educational outcomes. Perhaps this perception might have informed respondents' opinion about the function. However, training of trainers (ToT) course is necessarily to build confidence in teachers for them to participate in INSET programmes as facilitators hence devolve the function to schools.

Instructional leadership involves mentoring of teachers on preparation and execution of school curriculum activities. From the respondents' opinion, instructional leadership function should be devolved to schools. This is in line with Okumbe (1987) who postulated that instructional leadership is vital as it helps teachers to develop syllabi, curriculum guides, purposeful units of instructions and lesson plans in order to improve schools academic performance. The significance placed on this function is a clear pointer that teachers treasure being guided to undertake what pertains to their tasks. The motivation accrued from instructional leadership will help teachers and learners to be focus on school goals thus high academic achievement. Management of school facilities function is essential because they determine the quality of teaching and learning. Favourable learning environment require adequate facilities for curriculum to be implemented expeditiously. Facilities should be well maintained to reduce the cost of procuring new ones/ repairing. Respondents' opinion did not supported devolution of this function. Perhaps they thought that having an oversight body to supervise the facilities was essential in order to avoid challenges of school safety and misuse of funds. Onyango (2001) supports this position by contending that facilities should be regularly and frequently inspected or checked for any possible hazards given that acquiring the facilities is costly. However it is imperative to empowered teachers to assess the facilities and give their reports to schools' management. This will help solve minor challenges before they escalate to major ones leading incremental cost.

Lastly, the respondents mentioned financial constrains, inadequate skills to handle the QA functions and frosty relationships between teachers as challenges that would be experienced if the functions were devolved to schools.

Conclusion

The study was to investigate teachers' perceived expectations and challenges on devolution of QA functions to schools. The findings of the study had revealed that instructional supervision should be devolved to schools in order to: obviate issues of irregular QASOs supervision; insufficient preparation of teaching and learning materials; inadequate updating of professional records by teachers; teachers and pupils indiscipline; and shaky rapport between teachers and QASOs. INSET should not be devolved to schools because teachers did not have the capacity to handle teacher development programmes. Instructional leadership needed to be devolved to schools as it facilities running of curriculum activities. Management of school facilities should not be devolved to schools since safety systems might be compromised and lead to several catastrophes. The study also revealed financial constrains, inadequate skills to handle the QA functions and frosty relationships between teachers as challenges that would be experienced if the functions were devolved to schools.

Recommendations

Guided by the findings of the study, researcher recommended the following:-

(i)   The Ministry of Education should consider allocating more funds to schools enable devolutions of QA functions succeed.

(ii)   QASOs should mount capacity building seminars and symposia to equip the teachers with requisite skills to carry out QA functions.

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