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Challenges Influencing Effective Quality Assurance and Standards in Curriculum Implementation in Kenya

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Abstract

There have been persistent complaints on the declining standards of primary education in Kenya in recent times. The Ministry of Education through Quality Assurance and Standard Department have been at the forefront in addressing issues of quality in basic education. This paper describes the challenges that influence effective quality assurance and standards in curriculum implementation in selected secondary schools in Baringo North Sub County, Kenya. The target respondents for the research were teachers. The sample size for the research comprised of 103 teachers from 34 public primary schools. The respondents were selected through stratified random sampling method. The instruments used to collect data comprised of; questionnaire and interview guide. Quantitative Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data collected was analysed using thematic content analysis. The study established that teacher harassment, lack of adequate instructional materials, poor planning, and irregular visits were some of the challenges that affected delivery of quality assurance and standard process. The paper concludes that various challenges impede quality assurance and standards process in primary schools. It is recommended that all stakeholders to work together by Ministry of Education providing required support to ensure curriculum is implemented well.

Key words: challenges, quality, assurance, standards, curriculum and implementation

Introduction

Curriculum implementation in primary schooling is the process of putting all that have been planned as a curriculum document into practice in the classroom through the combined efforts of teachers, learners, head teachers, parents as well as interaction with physical facilities, instructional materials, psychological and social environments

(Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015). Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabus and subjects (Chikumbi & Makamure, 2005). Mkpa (2007) defined curriculum implementation as the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined efforts of the students, teachers and others concerned. The teacher is identified as the agent in the curriculum implementation process (Chepkuto, Sang & Chumba, 2018).

Curriculum implementation refers to how the planned or officially designed course of study is translated by the teacher into syllabus, scheme of work and lessons to be delivered to students (Odhiambo, 2008; Onzere, 2015). The above definitions show that effective curriculum implementation involves interaction within the teachers, learners and other stakeholders in education geared towards achieving the objectives of education. This implies that curriculum implementation demands concerted efforts of end-users of the curriculum for its effective implementation at all levels in order to achieve the desired goals (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015). The implementation of curriculum effectively in schools requires that issues of education quality are addressed. To ensure effective curriculum implementation in primary school, quality assurance has to be conducted on regular basis by inspectors (Vasileiadis, 2010). Quality assurance is an education system contrived to enhance and develop the quality of school methods, and educational products and outcomes. Kenyan for assuring academic quality in schools became crucial again, since quality assurance is one of the main objectives of the Bologna Process (Stenhouse, 2005). The prudent management of the curriculum can enhance academic performance and this largely depends on the administrators of the curriculum.

Despite the benefits of quality assurance and standards procedures, Chepkuto (2012) reported that most developing countries in Sub Saharan Africa are battling with illiteracy, inequity, lack of quality and relevance of their education policies and systems, whereby Kenya is no exception. Quality is at the heart of most education policy agendas and improving quality is probably the most important task facing many educational institutions. With this concern has also come an increasing accountability demand. There is growing concern by various stakeholders about the declining student achievement and teacher performance highlighted by strong media publicity and frequently acknowledged in educational analysis in Kenyan schools (Odhiambo, 2008). This is one of the reasons that motivated the researcher to conduct investigation on the challenges facing quality assurance and standard process in curriculum implementation in Baringo North Sub County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Curriculum implementation is the process of ensuring that what had been prescribed for a certain course is being implemented well in the school. Issues of curriculum

implementation have been on the rise in recent times and especially in Baringo North Sub County. According to Baringo North Sub County Education Report (2019), shows that majority of teachers do not complete their syllabus on time, some do not prepare schemes of work and lesson plans. This has seen the performance of public primary schools in the area performing poorly in Kenya Certificate of Primary School Education (KCPE) examinations. The questions that this paper asks: are the challenges influencing quality assurance and standards process in aiding curriculum implementation in schools? This is because, if the recommendations of quality assurance and standards officers are put into practice, curriculum implementation would be effectively done.

Aims of the Study

The aim of this paper is to determine challenges that impede effective quality assurance and standards in curriculum implementation in public primary schools in Baringo North Sub County. The paper also recommends specific strategies that need to be adopted to ensure that quality assurance and standards procedures are conducted well for the purpose of ensuring effective curriculum implementation.

Literature Review

Quality Assurance and Standards

According to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, quality assurance is a programme for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). 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). 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). The Education Act (1968) Cap 211 of the Laws of Kenya section 18, has mandated Quality Assurance and Standards Officers to enter and inspect any school or place at which it is reasonably suspected that a school is being conducted at any time with or without notice, inspect and audit the accounts of the school or advise the manager of the school on the maintenance of accounting records for the purpose of inspection or audit. Therefore, ascertaining the education provision standard is crucial to ensuring and maintaining credibility for programmes, institutions and national systems of education worldwide (Oyebade, Oladipo & Adetoro, 2006).

Challenges Influencing Quality Assurance and Standards and its Effect on Curriculum Implementation process

Various research studies have been conducted across the world to determine challenges influence QAS process towards curriculum implementation. For instance, in a research Ajibola (2008) pointed out that most of the teachers are not qualified to teach the subject introduced in the curriculum. Amugo (2007) studied the relationship between availability of expert teacher and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Nigeria. Her study consisted of 50 secondary school teachers who were randomly selected from the population of teachers in Lagos and Imo state. She hypothesized that there will be no significant relationship between availability of teachers and curriculum implementation in Nigeria and that available specialist teacher only use theory methods in their classroom work without the practical aspect (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015). Gbemi (2014) examined the state of school variables and their implications on effective performance of Quality Education Assurance Agency to enhance effective teaching and learning activities in schools below tertiary level. The study reveals that there is gross inadequate number of teachers and other school variables like classrooms, libraries, laboratories and instructional materials which affects the level of curriculum coverage and the academic performance of secondary schools. A study done by Buregeya (2011), in Uganda showed that headteachers do not carry out instructional supervision although they do visit classrooms in their schools. In addition, study conducted in three rural districts of Uganda on Teacher supervision practices by Kalule (2014) established that head teachers who are expected to conduct formative teacher evaluation lacked the required training and skills needed for the job. This implies that the benefits of teacher evaluation in Uganda may not be reaped as expected.

In Kenya, Wango (2009) asserted that QA is supposed to be carried out by Quality Assurance Officers from the Ministry of Education and principals. Standards in the schools for the deaf in the coast region have been quite a challenge to Quality Assurance Officers, teachers and parents. This has been witnessed by the attainment of low grades in KCPE examination, poor reading skills and low literacy and numeracy skills among deaf learners. Ajuoga, Indoshi and Agak (2010) result 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. Kimeu (2010) found and that to improve pupils performance head teachers are required to improve the management of schools. She further established that supervisory methods that headteachers used were inadequate since they were limited to checking of teachers' records of work rather than train in supervision methods in order to improve productivity.

Watsulu and Simatwa (2011) investigated the opportunities and challenges for the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards in its endeavor to ensure quality education in secondary school education in Kakamega central district. The challenges faced in enhancing quality education included lack of co-operation from some teachers and incidents of unavailability of finance records. The study concluded that schools were not assessed as many times as required although the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards had many opportunities. Many challenges were faced in the process of assessing schools and the coping strategies included adherence to professional ethics. Gongera, Wanjiru and Nyakwara (2013) The study revealed that there are numerous challenges faced by quality assurance and standards officers in the management of curriculum in schools for the deaf. Respondents indicated that there is non-supervision of curriculum implementation by the QASOs. There is also lack of communication skills, lack of manpower, lack of funds and lack of knowledge in special needs education. These challenges impede the prudent management of the curriculum and external supervision by the QASOs in the schools for the deaf. This in turn leads to poor academic performance.

Mwelu (2013) investigated the influence of Quality Assurance and Standards officers' instructional supervision practices on curriculum implementation in public primary schools in Central division, Machakos district, Kenya. Most of the teachers fear discouraging remarks from QASO in front of the pupils or fellow teachers. They also do not like harassment and abusive language during supervision. Others indicated that teachers are uncomfortable when they teach within the presence of QASO. Most of the head teachers indicated that teachers had negative attitude towards instructional supervision by QASOs due to fear of being intimidated by the unfriendly supervisors. They also indicated that teachers were usually not prepared for lessons with the right professional documents and also the presence of QASO in class distracted pupils attention in class since they kept looking at him thus failing to get the lessons concept. The head teachers indicated that QASOs need not to come to schools to carry out instructional supervision unannounced but rather on early notification, they should also create cordial relationships with teachers by addressing viewed issues with teachers outside classroom in the absence of the pupils. Ndaita (2013) examine the influence of the principals' instructional quality assurance role on students' academic performance in Kitui West District, Kenya. The research established that there were no well equipped libraries, computer resource labs for e-learning and well equipped laboratory in schools. In addition, other challenges experienced include lack of finances, inadequacy instructional resources, inadequate teaching staff, overloaded curriculum, vandalizing of resources lack of adequate government support and cooperation from school community. Zuriyati (2016) 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 constraints, 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 (Chepkuto, Sang & Chumba, 2018). As a measure to improve QA process towards curriculum implementation, Kosgei (2010) said the head teacher should visit the classroom frequently to encourage teachers. One way to help teachers improve instruction is through clinical supervision. This leads to an improvement in performance as teachers and pupils are motivated.

Materials and methods

The respondents for the study included teachers (who are the curriculum implementers) and zonal quality assurance and standards officers from Baringo North Sub County, Kenya. The location of the study was chosen due to declining standards of primary education. A total of 103 teachers participated in this research. The study was conducted in 34 public primary schools in the Sub County. The teachers were selected through stratified random sampling technique based on the zones that they came from while purposive/judgemental sampling method was used to select education officers. Questionnaire developed for teachers was used as instrument of data collection. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics; frequencies and percentages for quantitative data. Qualitative data from open ended question was analysed thematically. The results are presented in graphical illustrations, frequency distribution tables and narrations.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the findings of the study on the challenges influencing effective quality assurance and standards on curriculum implemented in primary schools in Baringo North Sub County. At first, the demographic results of the study relating to gender, education level and work experience are presented in the following sub-sections.

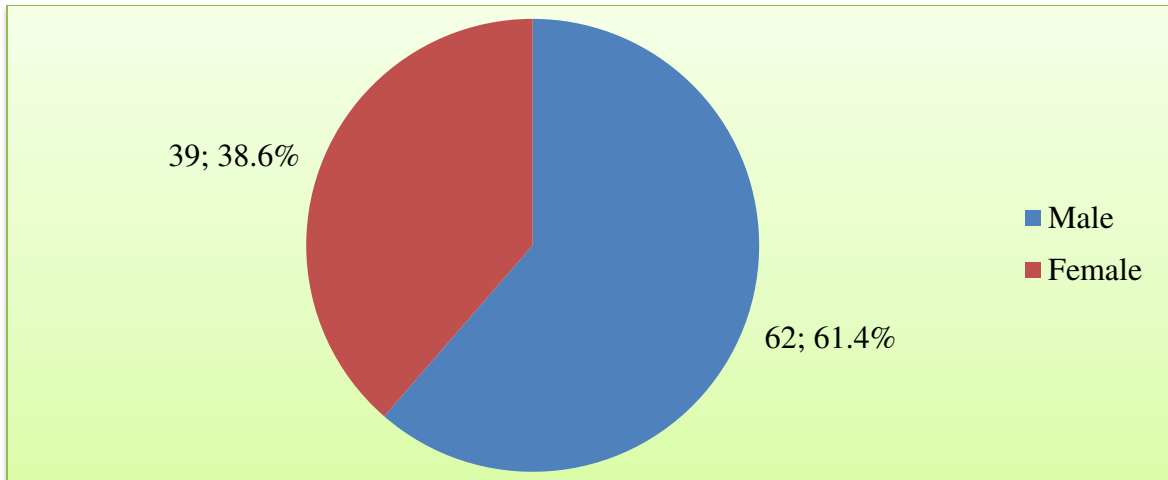


Figure 1 Gender of teachers

Most 62 (61.4%) of teachers were male while 39 (38.6%) were female. This shows that the distribution of male and female teachers is not equal considering that the region is considered hardship area which is prone to sporadic attacks making less preferred by female teachers. Secondly, the results on teachers’ education level are given in Figure 4.2.

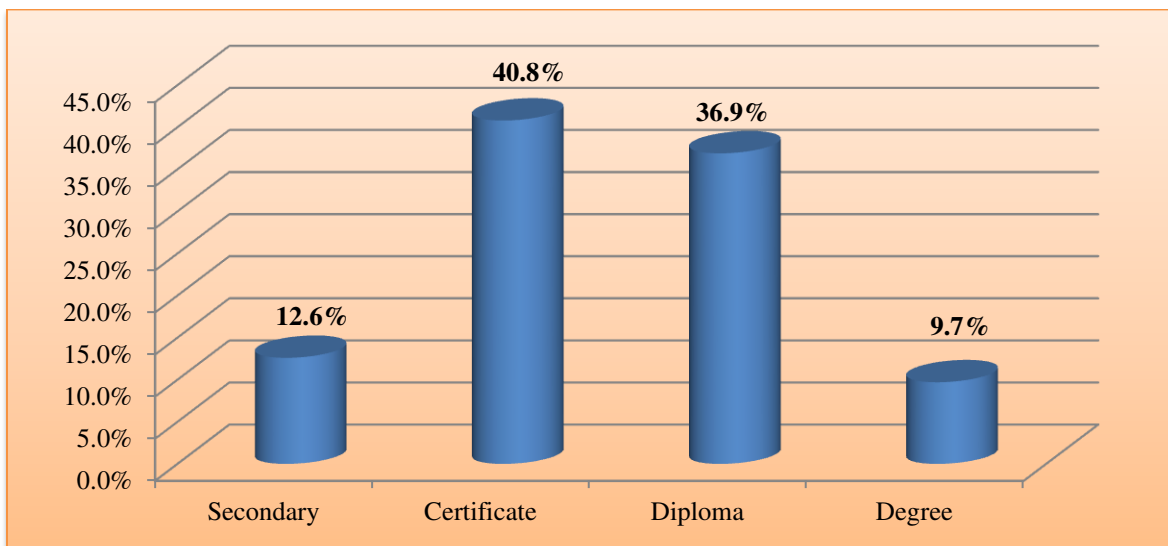


Figure 4.2 Teachers Education Level

Results shows that 42 (40.8%) of teachers had certificate (P1) level of education, 38 (36.9%) had diploma level of education, 10 (9.7%) had degree level of education and 13 (12.6%) were found to have secondary level of education. the statistics shows that in primary school due to inadequate number of teaching staff, there exist untrained teachers who when it comes to curriculum implementation process have not been trained. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to indicate their working experience and results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Working Experience of Teachers

Range	Frequency	Percent
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1-5yrs	4	3.9
6-10yrs	12	11.7
11-15yrs	20	19.4
16yrs and above	67	65.0
Total	103	100.0

Majority of teachers 67(65%) indicated that they had been in the service for 16-20 years, 20(19.4%) indicated 11-15 years, 12(11.7%) indicated 6-10 years while 4(3.9%) indicated that they had been in the service for 1-5 years. This is an indication that majority of both teachers and head teachers had over 5 years experience which implied that the responses given were from experienced respondents and a group that had interacted with the QASOs at all levels or at one point they had worked with them.

Teachers Understanding Role of QASOs in Curriculum Implementation

The teachers were asked to indicate their understanding on the role that QASOs played in curriculum implementation. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Teachers Understanding Role of QASOs in Curriculum Implementation

Understanding	Frequency	Percent
Visiting schools regularly and assist greatly in organizing workshops on teaching methods.	51	49.5
They give advice and ideas and ways of implementing the curriculum.	40	38.8
See that the curriculum is fully implemented.	40	38.8
They update teachers on changes in the curriculum and in preparation of schemes of work.	28	27.2
They should not dwell on professional records but check pupils work	12	

Majority 51(49.5%) of respondents indicated that the role of QASOs was to visit schools regularly and assist in organizing workshops on teaching methods, 40(38.8%) indicated that they gave advise and ideas on ways of implementing the curriculum, 40(38.8%) indicated that they oversee that the curriculum was fully implemented, 28(27.2%) indicated that they updated teachers on changes in the curriculum and in preparation of schemes of work and 12(11.7%) indicated that they not only dwell on professional records but checked learners work.

Challenges in Quality Assurance and Standards towards Curriculum Implementation

In every situation or work station and places, challenges arise due to differences in environment; therefore it was necessary for the study to find out what were the challenges

and hindrances faced or that made it difficult for the respondents to cooperate with the QASOs in curriculum implementation. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Challenges in Quality Assurance and Standards towards Curriculum Implementation

Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Teacher harassment	46	44.7
Negative approach	36	35.0
QASOs rarely visit school	33	32.0
Quarrelling teachers	28	27.2
Fear to meets QASO due to lack of preparation	24	23.3
Insufficient teaching materials and professional documents	24	23.3

Emanating from the findings, 46(44.7%) indicated that the major hindrance was that some QASOs were out to harass teachers, 36(35%) indicated negative approach by the officers, 33(32%) indicated lack of frequent visits to schools, 28(27.2%) indicated frequent quarrels with the officers, 24(23.3%) mentioned fear to meet QASO due to lack of preparation and 24(23.3%) mentioned insufficient teaching materials and professional documents. This implied that the work of QASOs was faced by many challenges ranging from harassment, negative perception, lack of commitment and insufficient resources.

Teachers Responses on How Quality Assurance and Standards can Improve Curriculum Implementation

The teachers were asked to indicate in which areas they could work best with QASOs to effectively implement the curriculum. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Teachers Responses on How Quality Assurance and Standards can Improve Curriculum Implementation

Areas	Frequency	Percent
In preparation of lesson plan and implementation.	50	48.5
Stressing syllabus coverage in time.	47	45.6
In preparation of teaching learning aids.	34	33.0
In disciplinary e.g. guidance and counseling.	33	32.0
In proper selection of teaching and learning materials/ resources.	29	28.2
Assessment of pupils work and progress.	17	16.5
Mobilizing other stakeholders for support towards education.	17	16.5

From the findings 50(48.5%) indicated that they could work best with the QASOs in preparation of lesson plans and implementation, 47(45.6%) indicated that they could work best in stressing syllabus coverage in time, 34(33%) indicated in preparation of

teaching learning aids, 33(32%) in disciplinary matters for example guidance and counselling, 29(28.2%) in proper selection of teaching and learning materials and resources, 17(16.5%) in assessment of pupils work and progress and 17(16.5%) indicated in mobilizing other stakeholders for support towards education. According to the responses given, it showed clearly that teachers could work best with QASOs in all aspects in implementation of the curriculum. The study found that, the intention of QASOs was to raise educational standards and deliver excellence by improving the quality of educational provisions in schools.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study revealed that there were challenges and hindrances towards effective quality assurance and standard in curriculum implementation. These challenges included QASOs harassing teachers, negative approach by the officers, lack of frequent visits to schools, frequent quarrels with the officers, fear to meet QASOs due to lack of preparation and insufficient teaching materials and professional documents. Other challenges were; insufficient materials and rare visits by QASOs, lack of enough time for interaction, lack of friendly environment, transferring teachers without consultation, lack of trust by teachers, teachers absenteeism and lack of preparation of schemes of work. Based on the findings of study, there is need to address the issue of insufficient materials and rare visits by QASO by employing more officers. The government should employ other officers to oversee the work of QASOs. Quality Assurance and Standards Officers should regularly monitor schools to find out whether activities are being implemented as planned and whether they are producing desired results and there is also need for sensitization of community members for increased participation in matters affecting curriculum implementation, through organized workshops

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