

A Critical Analysis of Qaso's Supervisory Practices on Teacher Effectiveness in Gatundu District of Kiambu County

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Abstract

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards is charged with the responsibility of ensuring quality education which entails monitoring of curriculum implementation in schools. The members of staff of the directorate are expected to visit schools regularly, conduct seminars and in-service courses for teachers among other activities. The researchers' aim was to conduct a critique review of Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASO's) supervisory practices on teachers' effectiveness. It was noted that the funds allocated to the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards was not enough. Only a few schools were sampled for supervision especially due to poor academic performance or students' unrests. QASOs lacked the necessary knowledge and skills among other shortcomings. The researchers concluded that Directorate of QASO needed to be strengthened to improve teachers' effectiveness leading to improvement in students' academic performance. This could be done through allocation of more funds, training among others.

Keywords: Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS), Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs), and teachers' effectiveness.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Duff (2000) defines quality assurance as a process through which an education institution guarantees to itself and its stakeholders that its teaching, learning and other services constantly reach a standard of excellence. In England, the earliest form of inspection meant checking the work of teachers. The school inspector was in charge. This title is still applied to certain supervisory officers in England and in British Commonwealth. The inspection by then was not an attempt to help the teachers improve instructions but was designed to determine whether or not the teachers did their work the way they were supposed to and if they didn't to replace them with teachers who would do the job entrusted to. (Elsbree, and Nally, 1967). According to Elsbree and Nally (1967), the inspection was focused on the teacher and its immediate purpose was to teach him/her how to teach others. The approach was direct and was assumed that the supervisor had knowledge and the ability sufficiency superior to that of the teachers to qualify him/her to do the job.

Most European countries are decentralizing their school systems. This has adversely affected the traditional inspection that was used in ensuring quality in schools. Traditionally, the inspectorate inspected and controlled school and teachers. Gradually with the new pedagogical doctrines and ideas, the process has become two way; on one hand, providing information and an evaluative judgment about schools and teachers, and on the other hand providing schools and teachers with advice, assistance and feedback (Ka'allen, 1997).

In many countries in Africa, there are problems of illiteracy, inequality, lack of quality and relevance of their education policies and systems which Kenya is struggling with. Many educational institutions are working towards the improvement of quality of education. There is a growing concern by various stakeholders about the declining student achievement and teacher performance highlighted by strong media publicity and frequently acknowledged educational analysis in Kenya schools (Odhiambo, 2008).

Quality Assurance and Standard Officer (QASO), is a recent term which refers to an educational officer responsible for supervision of the curriculum implementation in schools. This new term replaced the traditional term of "inspector". The term inspector portrayed the QASO as a person who comes from above to see that policies developed at the central education office were being implemented in schools. This idea created a rift between inspectors and teachers. Teachers tended to shy away from interacting freely with the inspectors for fear of fault finding and victimization (Wanzare, 2006). The new term of QASO is intended to remove the stigma associated with the inspector and to portray the officers as people concerned with improving quality and standard of education by working as partners with teachers. QASO's are persons appointed by the Department of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) which a department in the Ministry of Education to supervise curriculum implementation in schools. (Wanzare, 2006).

In Kenya, education reforms in the past have failed to achieve the desired outcomes due to ineffective and inefficient supervision. This has negatively affected teachers' effectiveness. This has led to calls for the strengthening of the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) particularly improving the knowledge skills and attitudes of the officers who carry out the role of maintaining quality in learning institutions (Ajuoga, 2010). The study aimed at evaluating the QASO supervisory practices on teacher's effectiveness in Gatundu North District of Kiambu County.

2. IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE ON TEACHER'S EFFECTIVENESS

2.1 Promotion of knowledge and skills

The quality assurance and standards officers help the teachers in developing personal knowledge, skills and competencies in the classroom. (Wang and Karugu, 1995). Teachers are supposed to learn many new skills and enlarge their knowledge base as they interact with the QASO's. This is through the feedback they get after assessment in class.

According to Ochuoba (2009), the essence of quality assurance systems is to ensure that the quality of teaching workforce is maintained. Teachers are supposed to become more effective in the teaching learning process as they interact with the QASOs. They may acquire new teaching pedagogical skills which enhances their teaching methods, thus improving their teaching.

2.2 Professional Guidance and Encouragement

Farrant (1980) notes that the QASOs offer professional guidance and encouragement to teachers. The QASO are supposed to guide teachers on how to conduct the teaching and learning processes as professionals. They ought to guide teachers on many aspects of education. Including teaching methods, creating conducive learning environment, use of teaching learning materials as well as curriculum interpretation. QASO ought to encourage teachers who at times are demoralized by such factors as poor remuneration, poor student academic performance, administrator's management style and their own personal conflicts.

2.3 Evaluating Professional Documents

According to Mobegi, Odingi and Oburu (2010) the QASO are involved in checking the teachers documents i.e. professional documents. Such documents include the syllabus used in drawing the schemes of work, the record of work, the record of work, the student's progress record, the lesson plan and lesson notes as well as student's lesson notes. They are supposed to guide the teachers in preparation of the same, in order to be effective in the teaching learning process.

2.4 Providing Feedback to Teachers

Boyd (1989) notes that if the QASO provide immediate feedback to teachers it could improve the teachers' performance because they will be able to identify their strengths and weakness and improve on their work performance. QASOs offer feedback to teachers on their personal presentation in class, mastery of content, teaching methods, use of teaching aids and their ability to communicate effectively to the learners. They also check on how well teachers' documents were prepared and put into use. Such feedback is vital because the teachers will be able to know his or her strength and areas of improvement so as to act accordingly.

QASO supervisory practices are supposed to improve teachers' performance in class which will enhance student's academic performance. Students are supposed to perform in a better way because teachers are using the right teaching methods, they have the right content, their documentation is well done and they are motivated to teach.

2.5 Fostering Positive Attitudes to Teachers

QASO are supposed to foster positive attitudes towards the teachers on teaching profession. The teachers are supposed to like and enjoy teaching, and have favorable attitudes towards their learners, be positive towards the school administrators. Favorable attitudes will make the teachers to be highly motivated and work effectively towards improvement of teaching learning processes.

3. CRITIQUES

Despite the fact that QASO are supposed to play a vital role in education and specifically on teachers effectiveness, their role has been compromised by many factors: -

According to Langat Albert Kipkirui (2011) the QASO lack enough funds to undertake supervision among teachers. The Ministry of Education does not allocate enough funds for supervision. The QASOs only sample a few schools with issues such as poor national examination results and high indiscipline cases. They visit such schools and reprimand the teachers, who are left confused and psychologically tortured, with little information on the way forward. Some schools are rarely visited by the QASO due to the same issue of lack of finance and teachers are left without proper guidance on the teaching-learning processes.

Most of the QASO were promoted from the classroom and therefore they did not possess the knowledge and skills on supervision. When such QASO visit schools, they do it on formality basis but they rarely help teachers to improve on their teaching. Teachers promoted to the QASOs have not had any formal training on supervision because colleges and universities do not offer it in their curriculum and thus they are highly limited in their supervisory practices. Milka Aoko Ajuoga, Francis Chisikwa Indoshi and John O. Agak (14th May, 2010).

In most cases, QASOs are not objective in their supervision, because they are compromised by corrupt school administrators who give them kickbacks, in return for a very good supervisory report. Some QASOs just visit the office and then write a very good report about their supervision regardless of the situation on the ground as collaborated by (Milka Aoko Ajuoga, Francis Chisikwa Indoshi and John O. Agak 14th May, 2010).

The QASO are very few and therefore their areas of specialization do not cater for all the teaching subjects in

schools. Some who are specialists in sciences are forced to supervise teachers whose area of specialization is languages or humanity. In some cases, they end up only supervising teachers in their areas of their specialty and ignore the others. In case they supervise an area outside their specialty, they end up misguiding the teachers since different subjects are handled differently. Langat Albert Kipkirui, (2011).

In some instances QASOs inform the school administrators on the intentions to visit their schools. Administrators likewise inform their teachers on the same. Administrators prepare their documents very well because the 'visitors' will be coming to school. Teachers also update their records before the supervisors come thus a lot of artificiality is created in the whole school. For example the teacher will drill the learners on how to respond to his/her questions. She will also inform them to respond to any name she will call them in order to be seen to have mastered all their names.

When there are conflicts between schools and the teachers, the administrators liaise with the QASOs to visit their schools, in order to silence/reprimand such teachers. This kind of supervision is counterproductive because it is not for the good of the teachers. Their weaknesses are capitalized on, and their strengths ignored. This demoralizes teachers which affect their teaching and the way they relate. There is a lot of subjectivity in QASO supervision on teachers because of factors such as dual relationship, prejudices and biasness based on different academic levels and gender differences due to vested personal interests.

Some QASOs are under instruction from higher authorities to visit specific schools on fault finding thus produce a negative report so that school administrators can be punished either through transfer or demotion. There is a strong delink between the internal evaluation on the school administration and the external evaluators i.e. QASO. The supervision report the QASO give ought to be implemented and followed up by the principal but it is shelved. Teachers have no access to such reports and they continue with their earlier teaching practices

4. CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, it is evident that despite the essence of QASO in improving the teaching learning processes in Kenya, it is faced with a myriad of problems, which impact very negatively on teachers' effectiveness and in turn student's academic performance.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Education should allocate enough funds to the directorate of QASO so that they are able to supervise as many schools as possible in continuous manners.
2. QASO officer should be adequately trained to equip them with proper knowledge and skills that will enable them offer proper guidance to teachers.
3. The number of QASO should be increased to cater for all the academic disciplines in schools
4. QASOs should be constantly deployed to different stations to avoid dual relationships and reduce subjectivity in their supervision.
5. There should be a very clear policy by the Ministry of Education on when and how supervision should be conducted. This will increase its objectivity.
6. The internal evaluator should make sure that the external evaluation report for the QASO is implemented to the full. External evaluators should make a follow up to see to it that their evaluation reports are implemented.
7. The Ministry of Education should regularly educate QASO and school administrators on the repercussions of corruptions to our education system i.e. they should adhere to their code of ethics in their work.

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