Positioning Secondary School Teachers as Passive Actors During School Quality Assurance Policy Implementation in Dodoma, Tanzania

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Abstract

While the impact of the School Quality Assurance (SQA) policy on students' learning outcomes is well-documented, there exists a limited understanding of how its implementation influences teachers' power and identity. This study analysed how teachers were positioned during the SQA policy implementation in four purposefully selected secondary schools in Dodoma Region, Tanzania. Data gathered from 19 participants, including heads of schools, department heads, subject teachers, WEOs, and SQAOs through policy documents and semi-structured interviews, unveil a critical observation. Despite teachers being pivotal to school functioning, the SQA policy positions them as passive objects lacking the knowledge to evaluate school quality based on proposed domains. This study contends that such positioning aligns with previous top-down school inspection models, which had limited impact on enhancing secondary school quality. To address this, the study suggests a radical shift towards teacher empowerment through collegial supervision rather than conventional external quality assurance visits.

Keywords: *school quality assurance policy, secondary schools, teachers, positioning, empowerment*

Introduction

Quality assurance in education, which originated in the manufacturing industrial sector, is a global practice aimed at ensuring the quality of systems, processes, and products (Karim, 2021). Initially confined to the industrial domain, the concept has evolved and found application across various sectors, including education. Quality assurance in education manifested as school inspection, a practice still prevalent in many countries today. School quality assurance (SQA), as implemented in educational institutions worldwide, engages both internal and external stakeholders. Its purpose is to reinforce agreed-upon quality standards in all aspects of school life, thereby ensuri-

ng the continuous attainment and preservation of acceptable benchmarks.SQA involves the ongoing assessment and reporting of schools to uphold these quality standards, guided by specific laws, regulations, principles, and procedures (Gravellis, 2016). This external quality assurance form concentrates on systematically evaluating school teaching and learning programmes to uphold quality standards (Gravellis, 2016). While there are variations across countries, quality assurance typically encompasses both external and internal evaluations. External evaluations enlist external actors who visit institutions to assess progress in teaching, learning, and assessment. By contrast, internal evaluation involves supervisory processes at the school level, encompassing self-evaluation, teacher appraisal, and support for professional development (Adu et al., 2014).

In Tanzania, the roots of school inspection can be traced back to the colonial education policy, which aimed to enhance education quality through systematic school visits and the observation of teaching and learning processes (Matete, 2021). Although the government took several strategies since independence to strengthen school inspection, it was constrained by a lack of competent personnel, poor transport, inadequate office spaces and office equipment, and insufficient staff housing (MoEC, 1995). The advent of education decentralisation and liberalisation policies in the 1990s necessitated more vigilant monitoring of schools and the establishment of a horizontal feedback mechanism between inspectors and education agencies, managers, and administrators at zonal, regional, and district levels (MoEC, 1995, p. 30). Through the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 1995, some resources were provided to improve school inspection. Despite these efforts, the efficacy of school inspection remained ineffective due to inadequate staffing, resources, and dependence on centralised decisions as required by the Education Act 1978 (MoEVT, 2014). By 2014, the school inspection structure, system, and processes required reforms as emphasised in the ETP 2014.

Reforming school inspection was accomplished through the implementation of the School Quality Assurance (SQA) policy, delineated by five principles and procedures (MoEST, 2017b). The first principle aims at fortifying the quality assurance system by enhancing internal quality assurance, close-to- school supervision, external quality assurance, information and communication systems, as well as staffing qualifications, recruitment, and deployment criteria. The second principle centres on elevating the quality of teaching and learning, concentrating mainly on the assessment of inputs, processes, and outcomes in alignment with established education standards. The third principle underscores transparency and accountability as pivotal to enhancing learning outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning. The fourth principle emphasises strengthening community engagement within the SQA policy. In contrast, the fifth principle focuses on augmenting resources through the mobilisation and deployment of adequate resources for effective SQA policy implementation (MoEST, 2017b, pp. 7-8). The adoption of the SQA policy resulted in the creation and dissemination in the

creation and dissemination of three pivotal policy documents nationwide. These documents, termed as policy discourses in this paper (Luke, 2018; Lester et al., 2017), comprise the *School Quality Assurance Handbook* (SQAH) (MoEST, 2017a); *Basic, Secondary, and Teacher Education Quality Assurance Framework* (MoEST, 2017b); and *Supervising Schools for School Quality Improvement: A Guideline for Ward Education Officers* (MoEST, 2017c).

However, the implementation of the SQA policy, as outlined in policy documents, focused on assessing, evaluating, and reporting school effectiveness within the designated "SQA Domains" (MoEST, 2017a, p. 19). These domains contained six aspects: learners' achievement, the quality of teaching, the quality of the curriculum, leadership and management quality, the school environment's impact on welfare and safety, and community engagement. Policymakers further detailed the SQA System Operation Model, comprising four components: external school quality assurance, school supervision, close-to-school support, and the school itself (MoEST, 2017a; 2017b). Designed to function collaboratively, these components aimed at enhancing learning outcomes. Key policy actors, including School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) at national, regional, or district levels, Ward Education Officers (WEOs) at the ward level providing close-to-school support, and Internal School Quality Assurance Teams (ISQAT) under the head of the school, played pivotal roles.

Remarkably, the SQA policy documents remained conspicuously silent on the role of teachers in assessing, evaluating, and reporting on the six domains. This silence, reflective of a lack of emphasis on specific issues by policymakers, underscored the need to explore the implications for policy implementation. Despite acknowledging the transformation from school inspection to SQA, policy documents failed to underscore the role of teachers in this transition. This silence highlighted a broader issue: the emphasis on teachers' power in reshaping their pedagogies towards a learner-centred approach through effective lesson planning, resource utilisation, and subject matter expertise. This stressed the pivotal role of teacher empowerment in SQA policy implementation, aligning with education policy literature's definition of teacher empowerment as practices that enable teachers to leverage their professional expertise, autonomy, and involvement in school-related decisions (Balyer et al., 2017).

The implementation of the SQA policy in Tanzanian secondary schools marked a crucial step towards reforming school inspection for quality education provision. While the policy aimed to significantly enhance teaching and learning quality, curriculum effectiveness, school leadership and management, the school environment, and community engagement, achieving this objective remains elusive. Despite well-documented impacts on students' learning outcomes, there exists limited knowledge on how the SQA policy positions secondary school teachers. Consequently, a thorough analysis of how teachers were positioned during SQA policy implementation is imperative for ensuring its sustainability and success.

Purpose of the study and research questions

This study aimed to critically analyse how SQA policy implementation positions subject teachers in secondary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the SQA policy implementation discursively position subject teachers in secondary schools?

2. How does the discursive positioning of subject teachers during the SQA policy implementation reshape their power and identity?

Literature Review

The fundamental role of teachers in SQA policy implementation

SQA policy implementation is a process happening after the policy is formulated and adopted. Teachers have a vital role in making and implementing policy decisions, especially those that aim to improve teaching and learning (Ferizi-Miftari & Rexha, 2018; Pennington, 2013). Pennington (2013) argues that education policy implementation should be grounded in teachers' knowledge and work experience since they possess good leadership capabilities useful in policy implementation. Similarly, Croll et al. (1994) proposed four models, which are useful for analysing teachers' role in educational policy formulation and implementation. The first model views *teachers as partners* in education policy-making and draws on pluralist theory, assuming that teachers and schools have a degree of autonomy in policy implementation. The second model regards *teachers as implementers* of policy change, which relies on the assumption that education policymaking and implementation are distinct processes, and that policy-making excludes teacher involvement. The third model perceives *teachers as resistors* of change whose involvement in policy must be limited. The fourth model regards *teachers as policymakers* in the practice of policy implementation. Since the school context in which policy is implemented differs, individual teachers find themselves developing independent actions that may be different from the initial policy proposals.

The role of teachers in policy implementation in schools has led some scholars to coin the term *teacher leadership* (Angelle & Danielson, 2006; DeHart, 2016; Sun & Leithwood, 2015; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leadership refers to the opportunity in which teachers contribute to decisions related to policy implementation. A teacher leader has to possess the knowledge and skills necessary to influence others for improving schools. Essentially, the emphasis on teacher leadership relates to teacher empowerment. As argued by Wenner and Campbell (2017), empowered teachers can re-imagine their teaching through five roles that will transform the

profession in a changing and complex world. These roles are a willingness to learn continuously, an ability to expand their knowledge and skills, and assuming flexible leadership roles. In addition, school leaders must be able to create an environment that supports collaboration and continuous professional development among teachers, as well as recognise the impact of rewards that encourage teacher leadership.

Teacher empowerment is an essential factor for effective SQA implementation since teachers are curriculum leaders (Balyer et al., 2017; Omebe, 2015; Elton, 2012; Mckay & Kember, 2009). According to these scholars, quality assurance should be considered a continuous and transformative process in which teachers facilitate customer satisfaction as one of the quality indicators—beyond traditional teaching and learning. Since teachers are the instructional leaders, innovative practices must involve them. Elton (2012) provides four elements: *empowerment*, *enthusiasm*, *expertise*, and *excellence* that are crucial for innovative teaching and learning. These four elements can be developed through teachers' self-evaluation using student surveys as an essential part of the learning process. Teacher involvement is "more likely to result in a culture of quality being embedded within an education programme" (Omebe, 2015, p. 155). However, it is not clear whether the current SQA policy provides an opportunity for teachers to conduct self-evaluation for continuous quality improvement. Additionally, Omebe (2015) contends teacher empowerment as a driver of quality teaching and learning rather than external quality assurance because it is in the classroom where theory meets practice. Teachers are often the first, and sometimes the only, support for students with a complex variety of needs that go well beyond what is found in the textbooks. Hence, teachers need to be considered major partners in SQA policy implementation because they provide unique and essential perspectives on policy (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

The literature review identifies three teacher-empowering models essential for school transformation and quality education. The models are "*teachers as transformative intellectuals*" (Giroux, 1988), *teachers as reflective practitioners* (Brookfield, 2017), and *teachers as colleagues* (Glickman et al., 2018). The supporters of the transformative intellectuals' model argue that teachers have a pivotal role in transforming their work to ensure quality in schools. This is because teachers use their professional knowledge to transform their schools in terms of the six domains focused on by the SQA policy. *The supporters of the teachers as reflective practitioners'* model, including Brookfield, 2017, and Hall and Simeral (2017), argue that reflection enables teachers to identify the effectiveness of their teaching methods for effective learning through reflection and research. Reflection and research are at the heart of what Schön (1983) described as *reflective practice*. Reflection enables teachers to apply theories in their everyday actions and practices. Reflective practice for teachers

is a vital concept in SQA as it is a means by which educators "reflect-in-action" and "on-action" to improve supervision, teaching, and learning (Schön, 1983).

However, a successful school supervision for quality assurance has to involve a paradigm shift from conventional supervision to *collegial supervision* (Glickman et al., 2018). This collegial supervision model has the following features: First, it encourages collegial rather than a hierarchical relationship between teachers and formally designated supervisors. Second, it is considered the province of teachers and formally designated supervisors. Third, it focuses on teacher growth and collaboration rather than compliance. Fourth, it fosters teacher involvement in ongoing reflective inquiry (see Glickman et al.*,* 2018 for details).

Theory for the analysis of school quality assurance policy implementation

Foucault's theory of power is useful in understanding power dynamics in secondary schools in the context of the SQA policy implementation (Lynch, 2011). According to Foucault (1980), there is a relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse. Foucault argues that those with power in society always control discourse to influence how an issue can be discussed and by whom. By controlling discourse, they control their knowledge about such an issue. By controlling knowledge, they also determine their thinking and identity. Foucault describes power as both destructive and productive, criticising theorists who consider power as only negative. He argues that "power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the privilege acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic position. It is an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated" (Foucault, 1980, p. 26). For Foucault, power is also productive because "it excludes, it represses, it censors, it abstracts, it masks, it conceals, it produces reality and domains of objects and rituals of truth" (p. 194). Similarly, he argues that power is omnipresent "because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93).

Foucault's theory of power as discursive, circulating, and dynamic is useful for critically analysing the SQA policy texts and discourses. It helped the researchers show how the dominant groups involved in the SQA policy implementation positioned teachers to reshape their power and identity in the six domains of the framework. The positioning of teachers in the SQA policy implementation was analysed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory, which provided a valuable guidance for policy analysis (Fairclough, 2013). CDA focuses on analysing power dynamics, social structures, and the role of actors in the policy processes. It allows for an analysis of how teachers are positioned within policy structures and how power relations shape their roles as policy actors. CDA views language as a social practice and is interested

in how such ideologies and power relations are expressed through language (Fairclough, 2015). CDA is *critical* for exposing the hidden power relations reproduced through the SQA policy implementation texts. For Fairclough, policy can be critically analysed by examining the relationship between language and social practice, which considers every instance of language use a communicative event consisting of three interrelated dimensions and procedural stages for analysis; *text*, *discursive practice*, and *social practice*.

In understanding the positioning of teachers through the SQA policy implementation and its impact on them, the analysis focused on policy texts and discourses because they are sites where subject positions are created and meaningful experience is constituted. Such policy discourses construct and reconstruct teachers as subjects. When teachers occupy certain subject positions in the SQA policy implementation, they construct subjectivity. This constructed subjectivity determines how teachers act, think, and practice their work in the wave of power relations exercised in schools.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, which is useful in understanding complex SQA policy implementation explored through diverse stakeholders' perspectives. Qualitative methods allowed the researchers to explore these complexities deeply, offering detailed insights into the nuances of policy implementation in diverse educational settings (Bingham et al., 2019; Luke, 2018). The approach also allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how SQA was perceived, interpreted, and experienced by different actors.

Four public secondary schools, which were part of a pilot study conducted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) for the SQA policy implementation between 2017 and 2019, were purposefully selected to understand the policy's implementation and experience. The pilot was conducted in the Dodoma region. The schools were located in Chemba, Chamwino, and Kongwa Districts.

The study had a sample of 19 participants, including four heads of schools, four heads of departments, four subject teachers, three WEOs, and four SQAOs. In terms of sampling, these participants were purposively selected because of their positions as SQA policy actors in schools and at the local government levels. It was assumed that due to their positions, they had rich information about the SQA policy implementation.

Data were collected from the SQA policy implementation documents and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The policy documents, which were analysed between 2020 and 2021 included *School Quality Assurance Handbook*, *Basic, Secondary, and Teacher Education Quality Assurance Framework*; *Supervising Schools for School Quality Improvement: A Guideline for Ward Education Officers; Whole School Evalu-*

ation Final Report for Chilongani Secondary School; *A Report of the Whole School Visit for Mlobwata Secondary School*; *A Report of the Whole School Visit for Mnyakosi Secondary School,* and *A Report of the Whole School Visit for Kongiki Secondary School.*

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with heads of schools, WEOs, SQAOs, and subject teachers to obtain their experiences of SQA policy implementation. Qualitative data were analysed through a blend of Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis model with the CDA theory. Braun and Clarke's model has six steps, including data familiarisation, initial codes generation, searching themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The analysis explored the meanings related to teacher positioning produced in and through the SQA policy discourses, implementation contexts and processes. Data analysis combined school-level SQA policy documents in relation to macro-level contexts focusing on the production, change, and negotiations of meanings as reflected in the SQA policy texts and discourses (Lester et al., 2017). While pseudonyms were used to represent schools, participants' names were not used. Instead, their work roles, such as Ward Education Officers (WEO) or School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs), were used.

Findings and Discussion

The study findings are presented based on how subject teachers were discursively positioned in the SQA policy implementation and how that positioning reshaped their power and identity.

Positioning Subject Teachers as Passive Objects Lacking Knowledge of Evaluating School Quality

As stated above, the SQA policy implementation in secondary schools mainly involved the assessment, evaluation, and reporting of school quality in the six domains. In each domain, assessment, evaluation, and reporting involved what policymakers called "Areas of Focus" (MoEST, 2017a, p. 19 -30). A critical analysis of these Areas of Focus and SQA reports indicated that in all the domains, teachers were positioned as *passive actors* or professionals who lacked knowledge of evaluating any of the six domains, as discussed below:

The discourse of "Areas of Focus"

In the evaluation of "The quality of teaching for effective learning and assessment" (MoEST, 2017a, p. 20-22), policymakers provided 17 "Areas of Focus" (in the form of questions) that were answered by WEOs, SQAOs, or Internal School Quality Assurance Team (ISQAT). In Table 1, the first column shows what was evaluated through the questions, which we refer to as the "subject" or "objects" of evaluation. The second column shows the number of questions that focus on the subject or object.

The third column indicates teachers' involvement in the evaluation.

Table 1

Passive Teachers' Positioning in Evaluating the Quality of Teaching for Effective Learning and Assessment

Subject or Object of Evaluation	*Number of Areas of Focus Used to Evaluate the Subject or Object*	*Areas of Focus that Required Teachers' Involvement*
Teachers	8	None
Learners	10	None
Teaching process	6	None
Learning process	5	None
Assessment process	3	None
Total	32	

Source: Constructed by authors from the analysis of the SQAH (MoEST, 2017a, p. 20-22).

As Table 1 shows, five objects or subjects were evaluated. About eight questions focused on teachers, six focused on the teaching process, and three focused on assessment. Similarly, about ten questions evaluated learners, and five evaluated the learning process. However, while teachers are instructional leaders, they were not involved in evaluating these elements. It was only SQAOs and ISQAT that did the evaluation. Thus, teachers' views, knowledge, and experiences were not valued. SQA policymakers assumed that the quality of teaching for effective learning and assessment could be effectively evaluated without teachers' voices. This practice positioned teachers as lacking knowledge of evaluating the objects or subjects, and they had constrained opportunities to reflect on their teaching and learning processes.

The discourses of "Areas of Focus" were also constructed in the evaluation of "Quality of Curriculum in Meeting Learners' Needs" (MoEST, 2017a, p. 23). As Table 2 shows, about three Areas were directed to the school, four to the curriculum, three to the learners, and one to the learning process. However, secondary school teachers evaluated none of the Areas. It was only WEOs, SQAOs, or ISQAT who evaluated them. This means that the quality of the curriculum was mainly evaluated through the external quality assurers' perspectives without inputs from teachers themselves.

Table 2

Passive Teachers' Positioning in Evaluating the Quality of the Curriculum in Meeting Learners' Needs

Subject or Object of Evaluation	Number of Areas of Focus Used to Evaluate the Subject or Object	Areas of Focus that Required Teachers' Involvement
The school	3	None
The curriculum	4	None
The learners	3	None
The learning process	1	None
Total	11	

Source: Constructed by authors from the analysis of the SQAH (MoEST, 2017a, p. 23).

Table 2 indicates that four objects were evaluated: the school, the curriculum, the learners, and the learning process. However, neither teachers nor learners were involved in evaluating all four objects related to evaluating this domain. This implies that SQA policymakers assumed that the quality of the curriculum could be effectively evaluated without teachers' voices.

The discourses of "Areas of Focus" were also constructed in evaluating "The Quality of the Leadership and Management" (MoEST, 2017a, p. 24-27). As Table 3 shows, there were 12 subjects or objects evaluated in this domain. In the evaluation, teachers were positioned as lacking knowledge of the subjects and objects being evaluated. Thus, they lacked the opportunity to share their experiences, opinions, and views with the SQAOs and ISQAT.

Table 3

Passive Teachers' Positioning in Evaluating the Quality of the School Leadership and Management

Subject or Object of Evaluation	Number of Areas of Focus Used to Evaluate the Subject or Object	Areas of Focus that Required Teachers' Involvement
School leaders	18	None
School leadership	4	None
The teachers	8	None

The learners	6	None
The learning process	6	None
The teaching process	4	None
Strategic planning	1	None
Strategic plans	1	None
The ISQAT	1	None
The community	1	None
The school	1	None
The curriculum	1	None
Total	58	

Source: Constructed by authors from the analysis of the SQAH (MoEST, 2017a, p. 24-27).

Involving teachers in evaluating the quality of the school leadership and management could empower them to implement the SQA policy because teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of school leaders and managers. Moreover, since evaluation also involves leadership and management of learning and resources, teachers are the facilitators of teaching and learning and users of the resources being evaluated. That means that teachers have first-hand information instead of WEOs and SQAOs who are external to the schools.

SQA policy implementation also involved the evaluation of "The Quality of the School Environment and its Impact on Welfare, Health, and Safety" (MoEST, 2017a, p. 28-29). Analysis of the positioning of teachers in evaluating this domain is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Teachers' Positioning in Evaluating the Quality of the School Environment and its Impact on Welfare, Health, and Safety

Subject or Object of Evaluation	Number of Areas of Focus Used to Evaluate the Subject or Object	Areas of Focus that Required Teachers' Involvement
The school	9	None
The school leadership	10	None
The learners	13	None
The school environment	3	None
The parents	1	None
The staff	1	None

The learning process	1	None
Total	38	

Source: Constructed by authors from the analysis of the SQAH (MoEST, 2017a, p. 28-29).

As Table 4 shows, about seven objects or subjects were evaluated in this domain. About nine questions focused on the school, ten (10) on school leadership, 13 on the learners, three on the school environment and three questions focused on parents, the staff, and the learning process. However, none of the questions were answered by teachers, which means that evaluation was done solely through the external quality assurers' perspectives. Involving teachers in evaluating this domain was vital since they stayed and worked in school longer than the WEOs and SQAOs (visitors). Moreover, since they work daily in schools, teachers experience the impact of the school environment on welfare, health and safety more than WEOs and SQAOs.

Table 5 shows that seven Areas of Focus were constructed to evaluate community engagement in school functioning. Findings showed that four questions focused on the school, two on parents, and one on the school community. However, none of the questions were answered by teachers, which means that evaluation was done solely through the external quality assurers' perspectives instead of teachers who work in schools. Teachers possess more knowledge of community engagement than external quality assurers.

Table 5
Passive Teachers' Positioning in Evaluating the Quality of the Community Engagement

Subject or Object of Evaluation	Number of Areas of Focus Used to Evaluate the Subject or Object	Areas of Focus that Required Teachers' Involvement
The school	4	None
The parents	2	None
School community	1	None
Total	7	

Source: Constructed by authors from the analysis of the SQAH (MoEST, 2017a, p. 30)

The discourse of classroom observation

Findings showed that during classroom observations conducted by SQAOs, WEOs, and ISQAT, teachers were observed like objects to "determine effective teaching and assessment" (MoEST, 2017c, p. 21) through the following questions:

Is the purpose of the lesson clear?

Is the lesson well structured?

Has the teacher planned the lesson in response to the learning needs of individual learners?

Does the teacher use a variety of teaching methods?

Does the teacher use praise?

Does the teacher encourage all learners to participate in the lesson?

How does the teacher assess learning in class?

The framing of these questions implies that classroom observation was one-sided, as there were no subject teacher's contributions in evaluating the teaching and learning in the classroom. The teacher was positioned like an object to be observed, evaluated, and reported. The SQA policymakers did not value the teacher's voice and assumed that they lacked professional knowledge to determine effective teaching and learning.

Similarly, findings indicated that during classroom observation, teachers were also disempowered through interference by some SQAOs. SQAOs interfered with the teaching and learning process as they did not observe the teaching and learning process unobtrusively. One interviewed teacher from Mnyakosi said:

> There is also a problem with some SQAOs who interfere with the teachers while teaching in class. As teachers, we expect them to observe what is being taught in the classroom silently and provide feedback later on rather than interfere with what the teacher is teaching. It confuses the teacher as well as the students (*Mathematics Teacher, Mnyakosi School, February 2020*).

The explanation above shows that the SQAO went contrary to the policy guidelines and some teachers' expectations that they would "not otherwise interrupt the flow of the lesson" (MoEST, 2017a, p. 14). This practice means that the teacher's professional power was not recognised, and his or her confidence was lowered. It also constructed students' beliefs that their teachers lacked subject matter or pedagogic knowledge.

Furthermore, findings revealed that there was less teachers' participation in discussing lesson observation reports, as explained by one Civics teacher:

> For instance, the SQAO does not discuss the weaknesses observed during lesson observation with teachers as they are always in a hurry to leave. This situation hinders teachers from getting feedback on what was observed. If there could be a face-to-face discussion between the SQAO and teachers, teachers would be helped on how to implement specific observed issues (*Civics Teacher, Kongiki School, February 2020*).

The voice above shows that some teachers do not get a chance to share and reflect on classroom observation, which could have helped them improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The discourse of "areas that need improvement"

The SQA reports for all schools that participated in this study had a section on "Areas that Need Improvement" in relation to school quality domains. The discourses that were constructed disempowered teachers in areas that needed improvement as follows:

The first area was teachers' knowledge of participatory pedagogies. As noted in the Kongiki SQA report, some teachers were instructed to "use the participatory teaching approaches in the whole process of teaching and learning" (Zonal Officer, 2018, p. 9). They were required to use a "variety of teaching methods that engaged learners" (p. 17) without considering whether such methods were suitable in the classroom teaching contexts. There was a presupposition among SQA policymakers that there were fixed teaching methods that engaged learners in all contexts. This was also confirmed in the Chilongani SQA report:

> There were predominantly lessons dominated by the teacher-centred method in which learners are not regularly engaged in the learning process through various work provided by the teachers. About 90% of teachers used a teacher-centred approach rather than a student-centred approach, resulting in inactive students in the class as teachers do not encourage students to participate fully in the whole process of teaching and learning (Zonal Office, 2019c, p. 5).

A similar finding was noted in the Mnyakosi SQA report:

> Some teachers do not use interactive teaching methods and do not ask analytical questions. Interactive teaching and learning processes are highly encouraged to be applied by both teachers and students. The use of participatory methods in the teaching and learning process is minimal (Zonal Office, 2019a, p. 9).

The construction of such discourses positioned teachers as lacking knowledge of participatory pedagogies and professional knowledge. This finding disagrees with Aubrey and Riley (2021), who argued that teachers possess professional knowledge of subject content and pedagogy as they attend professional training. It is demotivating to consider them lacking professional knowledge. As social subjects, teachers have their subjectivity in using this knowledge. Thus, the evaluation of the school quality domain needs to go beyond and identify contextual factors that constrain teachers' challenges in utilising the professional knowledge they possess.

The second area that needed improvement was the use of information from assessment to improve teaching and learning. For example, at Mnyakosi, it was reported that "Teachers should use information from the assessment to identify areas of the teaching processes that need to be improved to allow proper decision-making about remedial teaching so that students can make progress" (Zonal Office, 2019b, p. 4). A similar fin-

ing was also reported at Chilongani, where the teacher was commanded to "mark learners' works regularly so as to get information from learners' work to improve lesson planning for teaching. Learners should be given constructive feedback to improve their learning progress" (Zonal Office, 2018, p. 5). This means that teachers were positioned as lacking knowledge of the role of information related to assessment in improving teaching and learning.

The third area was lesson planning and development. This was clear in the Mnyakosi Secondary School SQA report, where the SQAO commented that:

> Generally, the classroom lessons were poorly prepared and improperly planned, including incorrectly stating specific objectives and poor lesson development and assessment. As a result, teaching does not encourage students to participate fully in the lesson, leading to an ineffective learning for them (Zonal Office, 2019b, p. 4).

The same finding was reported in the SQA for Parandesi Secondary School:

> The quality of teaching is weak, and the statement of lesson objectives is not SMART to be used for assessing learners' attainment. As a result, learners fail to achieve the intended specific objectives. Teachers do not state well the teaching, learning, and assessment activities in the lesson development stage. They often fail to utilise lesson plans in the teaching and learning process (Zonal Office, 2018, p. 5).

Such discourses positioned subject teachers as lacking the basic knowledge of lesson planning, which included aspects of the statement of specific objectives of the lesson, lesson development, and assessment.

The fourth area was teachers' subject matter knowledge. This was noted during an interview with an English subject teacher who remarked:

> The problem with quality assurers who visit our schools is that they assume that they have more knowledge than we regular teachers. For example, we taught the English Language Orientation Course for four weeks only because Form I students arrived late. We have to wait for the majority of them to report to school so that they can also benefit from the orientation course. However, they told us that students are expected to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy, and numeracy, which have not been adequately achieved. So, it was as if we lacked knowledge of the subject matter and school context. (*English Teacher from Kongiki School*, *February 2020*).

Through such discourses, teachers were positioned as lacking knowledge of English subject matter and expected outcomes from what they were teaching. Fifthly, teachers were positioned as lacking knowledge of assessment and, therefore, were observed whether they "frequently and regularly assessed learners' progress" (MoEST, 2017c, p. 17). Sixthly, teachers were observed and evaluated whether they checked "learners

understanding through questioning" (MoEST, 2017c, p. 17). This suggests that SQA policymakers assumed that questioning was a more suitable teaching method than other methods. Contextual differences of the classrooms, students, the subject matter, and teachers were less emphasised in selecting the questioning method. The construction of such discourses was disempowering for teachers because the way these areas for improvement were reported meant that policy actors assumed that teachers lacked such professional knowledge. The SQA policy actors arrived at conclusions without consensus with subject teachers and were pointed out as the cause of such weaknesses in teaching and learning.

The discourse of teacher professional development

The SQA policy discourses framed the task of teacher professional development (TPD) as externally motivated by WEOs. This was enhanced by framing TPD as a responsibility of WEOs as they were made to believe that they had "three big advantages" (MoEST, 2017c, p. 23). The first was their "background experience to know what good teaching involves" (p. 23), and the second was that they had knowledge of teachers in schools they supervised. The third advantage was that they were "close to the school and can arrange and conduct small scale training events at school or cluster level" (p. 23).

This framing positioned teachers as passive recipients rather than initiators and owners of TPD. The policy statements were silent on teachers' role in effective, continuous, and sustainable TPD. A teacher from Parandesi School reported this during an interview:

> Professional development initiatives need to be initiated by teachers and not WEOs. Alternatively, the motive could also begin with assessing teachers' needs from time to time to ascertain the changing pedagogic and curricular policy changes in global and national contexts. Then, training could concentrate and focus on those teachers' needs. Teachers would feel that they are always on the right track to upgrade their knowledge and skills. What WEOs do is come and impose what they know, even if it is not correct (*Teacher from Parandesi School*, *February 2020*).

As implied in this data, teachers lacked ownership and may not have been motivated to participate in such TPD. Such teachers had different views on their role in TPD, which seems to contradict the emphasis made through SQA policy implementation guidelines.

The discourse of focus group discussion

The implementation of SQA policy required SQAOs to provide classroom observation feedback through "Focus group discussion with staff" (MoEST, 2017a, p.15).

However, the framing of the discussion disempowered subject teachers because the SQAOs determined what and how to be discussed. It was stated that the discussion would «align with the School Self-evaluation, Domains, and Quality Indicators» (p. 15). It was unlikely that invited teachers would freely talk about their weaknesses during the discussion, as highlighted below:

> There is no good way of giving oral feedback after classroom observations, as we are not free to talk about the weaknesses of our fellow teachers and bosses. The SQAO are the ones that explain our shortcomings. You find that even administrative issues are discussed in front of all teachers, which we find to be improper. (*Teacher from Mnyakosi, February 2020*).

It was further noted by a Chemistry teacher that "Some SQAOs are too harsh when they provide feedback even when there was a need for clarification. We fail to provide our views" (*Chemistry Teacher, Chilongani School, February 2020*). This practice contradicted the SQA policy guidelines, which state that "The SQAO leading the discussion will set out the ground rules for the FGD, for example, that it is confidential to the room and personal comments or complaints about individuals will not be accepted." (MoEST, 2017a, p. 14). Therefore, feedback provision exercise disempowered subject teachers to discuss individual weaknesses related to the quality of teaching and learning processes, the curriculum, leadership and management, school environment, and community engagement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of how secondary school teachers were positioned in the SQA policy implementation reveals nuanced insights into their roles, perceptions, and experiences within educational policy landscapes. This study has revealed that the SQA policy implementation positioned teachers as passive objects to be observed and lacking professional knowledge. This finding contradicts the four models proposed by Croll et al. (1994) because the policy implementation practices does consider teachers as partners, implementers, resistors, or policymakers. By contradicting these models, the SQA policy is limited in improving school quality, similar to the previous top-down school inspection model. That is, with minor emphasis on teachers' power in quality improvement, the SQA policy discursive framing makes no difference with school inspection. Teachers were constrained to use their professional knowledge and experience to improve the quality of schools in terms of teaching and learning, the curriculum, leadership and management, the school environment, and community engagement. They were not trusted to evaluate the SQA policy domains. In the classrooms, they were passively observed like objects, and not creative professionals. Reflective teachers can identify which textbooks, syllabi, teachers' guides, and other

teaching and learning materials are more or less useful for teaching and learning. By taking an active role as transformative, teachers can shape the purposes and conditions of schooling. This task is possible when teachers have more influence over the ideological and economic factors that affect their work (Giroux, 1988).

The SQA policy implementation also constrained teachers' reflection on their practice. A teacher needs to be fully involved in policy implementation to enable reflection on their practices by looking back on their past actions and events to identify the best and weak practices for improvement. Reflective practice enables teachers to critically reflect on the forms, values, and ethics of school organisations and structures of their work that would result in radical movements for change. Reflection may help teachers learn from their experiences, appreciate the context that reshapes their work, evaluate the moral and ethical aspects implied in their work, and be responsible for their professional growth (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018).

Additionally, an effective SQA policy implementation has to enable collegiality in evaluating school quality domains. Collegiality is consistent with Foucault's theory of power, as it allows power sharing and circulation when policy decisions are made through discussion and consensus (Bush, 2020). Power sharing also enables a shared understanding of institutional objectives. Collegiality is supported by Strieker et al. (2016), who argue that teachers need to share leadership roles through coaching, reflection, collegial investigation, study teams, explorations into the uncertain, and problem-solving. Besides, collegiality in SQA policy implementation would provide room for rapid policy decision-making and allow school leaders to be accountable for policy implementation, thereby improving schools' quality in the domains discussed above (Bush, 2020). However, effective teaching and learning are not entirely determined by the teacher's knowledge but by other context-specific factors that may not be under the teacher's control (Pesambili, Sayed & Stambach, 2022). These may include class size, nature of the topic, the availability of textbooks, teaching-learning aids, students' characteristics, and teacher motivation (Thompson & Spenceley, 2020). In theories of teaching and learning, each teaching method is suitable in a particular context, and each has advantages over others in specific contexts.

The framing of the SQA policy implementation does not seem to consider such contextual factors. The findings concur with Kosia and Okendo (2018), who observed that teachers were not given adequate time to discuss the recommendations with SQAOs during the SQA visits, even where views differed from those of SQAOs. Such attitudes constrained teachers to develop their creativity to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the school environment after lesson observation.

Based on the study's findings, the following key conclusions can be made:

First, the study emphasises the tendency for secondary school teachers to be positioned as passive policy actors. Structural constraints, administrative hierarchies, and limited decision-making avenues often lead to their marginalisation within the SQA policy processes.

Second, the findings shed light on how SQA policy can impact teachers' professional autonomy. Limited involvement in policy implementation may hinder their ability to tailor educational practices to meet students' diverse needs effectively.

Third, the study emphasises the importance of fostering inclusive policy engagement and empowering teachers to contribute actively to policy discussions, design, and implementation processes. Enabling their voices in policy can enhance the relevance and implementation of SQA policy.

Fourth, there is a need to rethink the existing frameworks for SQA policy-making, acknowledging the fundamental role teachers play in the education system. Reconsidering policy structures to strengthen teacher agency and involvement emerges as a crucial aspect of effective SQA policy reform.

The study underscores the need to reposition teachers from passive actors to engaged stakeholders in the SQA policy processes. Empowering them as active participants in policy discussions is a crucial step towards fostering a more collaborative, adaptive, and effective SQA policy framework.

Further studies may be done to explore strategies for increasing teacher agency within SQA policy implementation. Exploring innovative models of teacher involvement in policy-making, implementation, and evaluation may provide valuable insights.

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