

Strategies for Strengthening School Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools: Evidence from Dodoma City, Tanzania

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Abstract

School quality assurance is expected to raise the standard of teaching and learning, yet examination results in many Tanzanian public secondary schools remain weak. This study examined strategies to strengthen school quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Dodoma City, Tanzania. Three subsidiary questions guided the inquiry: which strategies teachers consider most and least promising, what heads of schools apply or recommend at school level and what support they need from the city education office, and what improvements the city school quality assurance office considers necessary. The study followed Total Quality Management Theory and used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design within a pragmatist paradigm. Ninety-three respondents took part: 85 teachers completed a five-point Likert questionnaire, and 07 heads of schools and 01 City School Quality Assurance Officer were interviewed. Questionnaire data were analysed using frequencies, means and standard deviations; interview data were analysed thematically. Teachers rated increased funding highest ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.27$) and the use of digital tools lowest ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.33$), although every strategy attracted agreement from at least two-thirds of the sample. Inter-school collaboration produced the widest spread of opinion ($SD = 1.43$). Heads of schools prioritised staffing, ICT infrastructure and a culture of continuous improvement, and looked to the city education office for on-site capacity building. The quality assurance office identified budget expansion, timely communication of curriculum and policy changes, and follow-up on inspection reports as key priorities. The study concludes that the binding constraints on quality assurance in Dodoma City are resource-related rather than attitudinal, and recommends that school management institutionalise internal classroom observation with clear timetables and documented feedback loops.

Keywords: Academic Performance, School Quality Assurance, Quality Assurance Practices.

Introduction

School quality assurance refers to the systematic processes through which schools are held to defined educational standards and supported to improve on them (Joseph & Urio, 2025; Seniwoliba, 2014). In practice, it operates through a recognisable cluster of activities: accreditation and evaluation, performance monitoring and data collection, the setting of curriculum and teaching standards, stakeholder engagement, and internal audit and review (Ogunshe, 2016; Seniwoliba, 2014). Self-evaluation sits at the centre of that cluster. Through it, a school appraises its teaching quality, learner progress, leadership, and climate, and establishes where it is strong and where it needs support (Allais, 2017; Kigozi & On, 2020).

Curriculum monitoring forms a second cluster. Schools in Tanzania do not write the national curriculum; they implement it. Quality assurance therefore monitors the fidelity and appropriateness of that implementation: whether the syllabus is covered, whether teachers interpret it in ways suited to their learners, and whether assessment matches the stated competences (Gibson & Linn, 2005; Ishemo, 2021). Feedback from students, staff and parents, feeds into the same process and keeps it from hardening into a purely administrative exercise (Mursidi *et al.*, 2020; Pitsoe & Maila, 2014).

Where these practices function well, learning outcomes tend to follow. Regular assessment paired with targeted intervention has been associated with better teaching methods, stronger learner engagement and improved examination results in both primary and secondary settings (Katete, 2023; Makiya *et al.*, 2022). The effects extend to the school's adult community. Monitoring experienced as supportive rather than punitive has been linked to teacher job satisfaction, retention, and a more positive school climate (Niu *et al.*, 2022; Qingyan *et al.*, 2023).

Tanzania has invested substantially in this area. Successive sector plans have expanded access, distributed teaching and learning materials, recruited teachers and financed classrooms and laboratories (United Republic of Tanzania-URT, 2022). A dedicated School Quality Assurance Department monitors school-level activity, on the reasoning that well-managed resources and procedures will deliver the intended educational outcomes (Phillymon, 2020). Nevertheless, performance in secondary education remains uneven, and the gap is widest in schools serving poorer communities (Makiya *et al.*, 2023; National Examination Council of Tanzania-NECTA, 2023). Limited teaching and learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, the language of instruction, and weak parental support are among the most commonly cited explanations (Medard & Mwila, 2022; Phillymon, 2020).

The problem addressed here is narrower than that national picture. Tanzanian research has documented what school quality assurance officers do and, in several cases, why implementation falls short of policy intent (Kassim *et al.*, 2024; Mbuya & Amos, 2024; Medard & Mwila, 2022). Much less is known about what system operators would change. Dodoma City is a useful case in this respect. A single city office coordinates quality assurance for its public secondary schools, and school-level accounts point to irregular visits, delayed feedback, and limited follow-up once inspection findings are issued (Medard & Mwila, 2022). When practices are already strained, prescribing more of the same is unlikely to help. Evidence is needed first on which strategies teachers, heads of schools, and quality assurance officials in that setting judge capable of strengthening what already exists. Without such evidence, improvement efforts risk being designed around assumptions rather than around the constraints practitioners actually face.

The study aimed to examine strategies for strengthening school quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Dodoma City, Tanzania. Three subsidiary questions were addressed:

- i) Which strategies do teachers consider most and least likely to strengthen quality assurance practices in their schools?
- ii) What strategies do heads of schools apply or recommend at school level, and what support do they require from the city education office?
- iii) What improvements does the city school quality assurance office consider necessary, including in its support to schools that struggle to meet quality standards?

Literature Review

Quality Assurance and Quality Assurance Practices

Quality assurance is the set of systematic procedures and policies through which an education system establishes that provision meets agreed standards and satisfies stakeholder expectations (Pitsoe & Maila, 2014; Seniwoliba, 2014). It serves two purposes in some tension: accountability to funders, regulators, and the public, and continuous improvement of teaching, learning, and administration (Ishemo, 2021; Odukoya, 2025). Adherence to national and international standards underwrites institutional credibility, but the same standards can invite compliance behaviour if enforcement outweighs support. The literature distinguishes internal from external mechanisms. Internal quality assurance covers the self-assessment, monitoring and improvement work an institution conducts on itself, including performance appraisal, curriculum review and the collection of student feedback (Kigozi & On, 2020; Mbuya & Amos, 2024). External quality assurance includes inspection, accreditation, and audits by regulatory bodies that verify compliance with published benchmarks (Ogunshe, 2016). Both depend on stakeholder

participation. Odukoya (2025) and Mursidi *et al.* (2020) both argue that consistent quality management depends on aligning policy with the engagement of administrators, teachers, students, and policymakers, and that frequent policy change without corresponding communication undermines that consistency.

A terminological distinction matters for what follows. Quality assurance denotes the system and its governing policy. Quality assurance practices denote the observable activities through which that system operates in a particular school: the classroom observation, the scrutiny of lesson plans and schemes of work, the checking of syllabus coverage, the moderation of assessment, and the feedback and follow-up that should close the loop (Joseph & Urio, 2025; Kassim *et al.*, 2024). This study focuses on the second. It focuses on strategies that could improve practice, not on redesigning national policy.

Quality Assurance Practices and Academic Performance

Recent empirical work converges on a positive association between well-executed quality assurance practices and learner attainment, although the strength of the association varies by setting. Goshu *et al.* (2024) found that weaknesses in examination and monitoring arrangements in Ethiopian institutions translated directly into diminished learning quality. In Nigerian secondary schools, Shehu and Magaji (2024) reported that curriculum alignment with learning objectives, sound teaching methodology, varied assessment, and comprehensive learner support improved education quality and, with it, student attainment. Mumayyizah *et al.* (2024) reached a similar conclusion in Indonesian junior schools, where strategic planning, structured programme implementation, strict quality control, and continuous development distinguished higher-achieving schools.

Tanzanian evidence follows the same direction. Makiya *et al.* (2022) found that frequent school visits, follow-up visits, prompt release of feedback by quality assurance officers, the use of non-threatening language and professional development support were the strategies that improved learning achievement in Arusha primary schools; their later study confirmed the importance of the same criteria across a wider sample (Makiya *et al.*, 2023). Katete (2023) reported classroom observation to be the most common practice sustained across the academic year in government technical institutions, and linked it to improved teaching and administrative processes. Kassim *et al.* (2024) documented a comparable contribution to instructional practice in Zanzibar secondary schools. Working in Morogoro Municipality, Mbuya and Amos (2024) found that internal quality assurance practices were

constrained less by teacher attitude than by staffing shortages and the absence of dedicated internal quality assurance officers.

Two mediating factors recur. The first is teacher preparedness, which Damien and Claire (2022) found to be a strong correlate of learner performance in public secondary schools, and which Kumari and Pandey (2025) link to the availability of structured, continuing professional development rather than one-off training. The second is technology. Earlier work linked computers used for lesson planning and record-keeping to more effective curriculum implementation (Saeed, 2018), and Samuel and Farrer (2025) show that digital records shorten the interval between observation and feedback. Older comparative work on curriculum practice (Gibson & Linn, 2005) is retained here only for its account of how curriculum review was historically organised; the empirical claims in this section rest on studies published since 2018.

The literature does not settle which of these strategies practitioners in a given district would prioritise if they had to choose. Studies tend to establish that a practice matters, then recommend strengthening it, without asking those who operate it where the binding constraint lies. This study addresses that gap.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Total Quality Management Theory, associated with the work of W. Edwards Deming from the 1950s onwards and concerned with continuous improvement across every part of an organisation through quality control, employee involvement and attention to those the organisation serves (Fatimah *et al.*, 2016). Five of its propositions directly relate to this study. Continuous improvement treats quality as an ongoing cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting rather than a periodic audit. Employee involvement holds that those who deliver a service should help design how it is monitored. Fact-based decision making requires that judgements rest on collected evidence. Process capability holds that a process can perform only as well as the staffing, funding, and infrastructure available to it allow. Benchmarking treats comparison with other units as a source of improvement (Brits, 2018; Evans & Lindsay, 2020; Kigozi & On, 2020).

Applied to schools, these propositions predict a particular pattern. When teachers participate in planning quality assurance activities, implementation fidelity should improve, and resistance should fall. Where monitoring generates usable data that is fed back promptly, instructional decisions should improve. Where the process is under-resourced, no amount of exhortation should compensate. Studies of Total Quality Management in education report gains in curriculum implementation, teacher performance and student

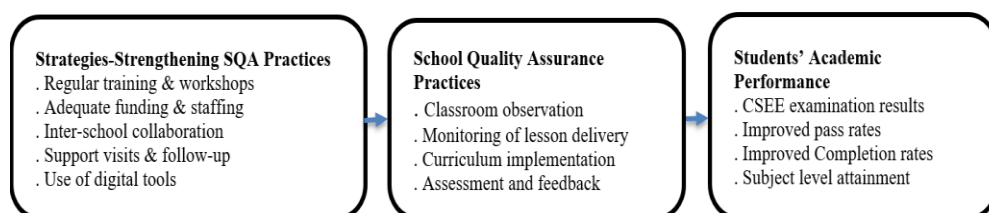
engagement when the propositions are implemented together rather than selectively (Cheng, 2022; Kassim *et al.*, 2024; Suna *et al.*, 2021).

One adaptation is necessary. Total Quality Management was developed for firms serving paying customers, and its customer-focus proposition does not transfer to schooling without qualification. Students are not purchasers of a service they can decline, and treating examination results as the sole measure of satisfaction narrows education to what is testable (Menteşoğulları, 2023; Yip, 2024). The framework is therefore used here in its process sense: it supplies a vocabulary for asking whether the school quality assurance process is adequately staffed, resourced, participatory and evidence-driven. It is not used to license a market reading of Tanzanian public education.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1:

Conceptual framework: strategies, quality assurance practices and academic performance



Source: Adapted from Evans and Lindsay (2020) and Kigozi and On (2020).

Figure 1 sets out the relationships assumed in this study. Strategies for strengthening quality assurance, among them training, funding, teacher involvement in planning, digital tools and inter-school collaboration, are treated as the independent variable. They are expected to act on the quality of school quality assurance practices, which mediate the relationship: better-resourced and more participatory arrangements should produce more regular classroom observation, closer monitoring of lesson preparation and syllabus coverage, and sounder assessment. Students' academic performance, measured through examination results, pass rates and completion rates, is the dependent variable. Government support, resource availability, school leadership and teacher motivation are treated as intervening factors that may strengthen or dampen the relationship at either stage.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach within a pragmatist paradigm and used a convergent parallel design. The study collected quantitative and qualitative data in a single phase, analysed them separately, and then

compared them to determine whether the two strands supported or contradicted each other. The design suited the research questions because the strategies under investigation had to be measured across a body of teachers and, at the same time, explained by the small number of officials responsible for implementing them.

Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures

The target population comprised all 41 public secondary schools in Dodoma City, together with their 1,540 teachers, 41 heads of schools and the one education officer responsible for quality assurance (RAS, Dodoma Region, 2025). From this population, 93 respondents were drawn.

Table 1

Composition of the study sample (N = 93)

Category of respondent	Number	Sampling procedure/instrument
Teachers	85	Simple random / questionnaire
Heads of schools	7	Purposive / interview
City school quality assurance officer	1	Purposive / interview
Total	93	

Source: Field Data (2025).

Simple random sampling was used to select 85 teachers from seven public secondary schools, giving every teacher on the school registers an equal chance of selection and limiting selection bias. Purposive sampling was used for the eight key informants: the seven heads of the sampled schools and the city school quality assurance officer. These eight were selected because their positions gave them access to information about quality assurance planning, execution and follow-up that no other respondent held. *Table 1* summarises the sample.

Data Collection Instruments

Two instruments were used. The researcher collected data from teachers using a researcher-designed questionnaire. Its main section presented five statements on strategies for strengthening quality assurance practices, each rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The study used a semi-structured interview guide with eight key informants: heads of schools answered three questions, and the quality assurance officer answered three more, covering strategies in use, support required from the city education office, assistance to struggling schools, and the role of professional development.

Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

Content validity was established by submitting the draft instruments to management and education experts and to the research supervisors, whose

observations were used to revise the wording and coverage of items before the main study. The instruments were then piloted, and the Likert section returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80, which exceeds the 0.70 threshold conventionally accepted for internal consistency. Trustworthiness of the qualitative strand was addressed in three ways: interview responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim; a second reader checked codes and emerging themes against the transcripts; and findings from the interviews were compared with the questionnaire results, so each strand served as a check on the other.

Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires were administered to the 85 sampled teachers, and all were returned, giving a response rate of 100 per cent. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Quantitative data were analysed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Mean scores were interpreted against the conventional five-point ranges: 1.00 to 1.80 (strongly disagree), 1.81 to 2.60 (disagree), 2.61 to 3.40 (neutral), 3.41 to 4.20 (agree) and 4.21 to 5.00 (strongly agree). Standard deviations were used to gauge the spread of opinion, with a larger value indicating less consensus among teachers on a given strategy. Interview transcripts were coded and grouped into categories and themes, with frequencies recorded for the number of respondents raising each theme. The two strands were then compared question by question.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained research clearance from The Open University of Tanzania, and the Dodoma Regional Administrative Secretary and the Dodoma City Director granted permission to collect data. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, participated voluntarily, and gave consent before data collection. No respondent or school is identified by name; school heads are reported by letter and officials by office.

Findings

The three subsidiary questions organise findings. Within each subsection, the quantitative or coded results are presented first and then illustrated with interview evidence.

Teachers' Views on Strategies for Strengthening Quality Assurance Practices

Table 2 reports how the 85 teachers rated the five strategies. Disagree combines strongly disagree and disagree responses; agree combines agree and strongly agree responses.

Table 2:
Teachers' ratings of strategies for strengthening quality assurance practices (n = 85)

Strategy	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Mean (M)	SD	Rank
Increased funding would improve quality assurance effectiveness	16 (18.8)	1 (1.2)	68 (80.0)	4.02	1.27	1
Regular training workshops should be provided on quality assurance	14 (16.5)	3 (3.5)	68 (80.0)	3.99	1.31	2
Involving teachers in quality assurance planning would enhance implementation	15 (17.6)	6 (7.1)	64 (75.3)	3.96	1.27	3
Collaboration with other schools would strengthen quality assurance practices	23 (27.1)	5 (5.9)	57 (67.1)	3.68	1.43	4
Use of digital tools would make quality assurance processes more efficient	22 (25.9)	6 (7.1)	57 (67.1)	3.67	1.33	5

Note: Scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Disagree combines the strongly disagree and disagree categories; Agree combines agree and strongly agree. Percentages are of n = 85 and may not total 100 owing to rounding—source: Field data (2025).

All five strategies fell within the agree band of the interpretation scale, so teachers endorsed the whole set rather than discriminating sharply among them. Nevertheless, the differences that emerged are informative. Increased funding was rated highest ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.27$), with 68 teachers, four-fifths of the sample, agreeing or strongly agreeing that adequate financing would improve the effectiveness of quality assurance. Only one teacher was undecided on this item, the lowest neutral count in the table, suggesting that teachers hold settled views on the role of money. Regular training workshops attracted the same level of agreement (68 teachers, 80.0%) and a mean only marginally lower ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.31$).

Teachers rated the lowest strategy as using digital tools ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.33$). Fifty-seven teachers (67.1%) agreed that digital tools would make quality assurance more efficient, but 22 (25.9%) disagreed, the second-highest level of dissent recorded. Inter-school collaboration produced a nearly identical mean ($M = 3.68$) but the largest standard deviation in the table ($SD = 1.43$), together with the highest count of dissent at 23 teachers (27.1%). Dispersion, rather than central tendency, is the more revealing statistic here: teachers agreed on what money and training would do. They disagreed on what technology and collaboration with other schools would do. Interview evidence from the heads of schools, reported in section 4.2, offers a possible explanation.

School-Level Strategies and Support Sought from the City Education Office

The seven heads of schools were asked which strategies they had used or would recommend to strengthen quality assurance in their schools, and how support from the City Education Office could improve implementation. Table 3 presents the coded responses.

Table 3
Heads of schools' strategies and support needs (n = 7)

Focus	Category	Themes raised
Strategies applied or recommended at school level	Staffing capacity	More teaching staff; a permanent internal quality assurance officer
	Infrastructure and ICT	Reliable internet connectivity; a functioning computer laboratory; general facility upgrading
	Internal monitoring and evidence use	Regular internal evaluation and peer review of teaching; use of learner performance data to guide improvement plans
	Parental and community engagement	Collaboration with parents and the community to promote accountability and support school programmes
Support sought from the city education office	Professional learning culture	Continuing training; deliberate cultivation of a culture of continuous improvement
	Capacity building and training	Training for teachers and for heads of schools in quality assurance and instructional leadership
	On-site support visits	Visits to schools for coaching and capacity building rather than inspection alone
	Performance evaluation support	Assistance with subject-level performance evaluation and moderation
	Staffing support and deployment	Allocation of newly employed and transferred teachers to schools with coverage gaps

Source: Field Data (2025).

Staffing was the single most frequently raised concern at school level, mentioned by three of the seven heads, who wanted both additional teaching staff and a permanent internal quality assurance officer rather than the current arrangement in which the role is added to an existing teaching load. Two heads pointed to infrastructure, specifically internet connectivity and a working computer laboratory. Two others described monitoring arrangements they had already put in place:

I have implemented regular internal evaluations and peer reviews to monitor teaching effectiveness. I also encourage continuous professional development to equip teachers with modern teaching methods, strategies and techniques. Collaboration with parents and the community has been key in promoting

accountability and support for school programmes. I would recommend strengthening data-driven decision-making to track student progress and guide improvements in teaching and learning (*Head of School C, Field data, 2025*).

A second head described a closely similar arrangement, adding that performance data should drive the school improvement plan rather than sit in a file:

Regular peer reviews and internal monitoring are very effective in strengthening quality assurance. I also prioritise professional development sessions so teachers stay updated with new teaching methods, strategies and techniques. Engaging parents and the community has helped create a shared sense of responsibility for student success. I would recommend using students' performance data to guide school improvement plans and make evidence-based decisions (*Head of School F, Field data, 2025*).

Two features of these accounts are worth noting. Neither head mentioned inter-school collaboration, which helps explain the divided teacher responses on that item in Table 2. If collaboration is not part of established practice at school level, teachers have little basis on which to judge it. Both heads also treated internal monitoring as something they had instituted themselves rather than as a requirement transmitted from the city office, which points to uneven practice across the seven schools.

On external support, the dominant request was targeted capacity building for both teachers and heads of schools, delivered through school visits rather than centralised workshops. Heads valued the visit format because coaching could be adapted to each school's circumstances. They next raised assistance with subject-level performance evaluation, because consistent evaluation criteria across schools would make comparison meaningful. The fourth request concerned deploying newly employed and transferred teachers to schools with the largest coverage gaps, linking the staffing constraint above to decisions made outside the school.

Improvements Sought by the City School Quality Assurance Office

The city school quality assurance officer was asked what improvements would enhance quality assurance at the city level, how the office supports schools struggling to meet standards, and what part professional development plays. Table 4 presents the coded responses across the three questions.

Table 4
Improvements identified by the City School Quality Assurance Office

Category	Theme	Explanation
Resource enhancement	Resourcing	The City should improve budget allocation to the quality assurance office so inspection coverage can be extended.
Information and policy synchronisation	Policy alignment	Quality assurance officers should be informed promptly of curriculum and policy changes so that inspection criteria remain current.
Stakeholder engagement and feedback	Accountability and feedback	Schools should act on inspection reports, with feedback provided to schools and follow-up on agreed actions.
Inter-institutional collaboration	Sharing of practice	Closer collaboration between schools and the city education office to share practice and address common problems
Support to struggling schools	Teacher training and skills enhancement	Continuing professional development is the principal form of assistance offered to schools that fail to meet standards.
Role of professional development	Instructional and learning quality	Professional development is regarded as the main route to improved teaching, learning and subsequent compliance with standards.

Note. Themes drawn from three interview questions put to the city school quality assurance officer.

Source: Field Data (2025).

Three priorities dominated the account given at city level. The first was funding, specifically the budget available to the quality assurance office, which determines how many schools it can visit and how often. The second was how quickly curriculum and policy changes reach the officers who inspect against them; when criteria are out of date, inspections lose authority in schools' eyes. The third was follow-up. Reports are produced, but the officer's concern was whether any action follows once they have been filed. Asked what improvements were needed, the officer replied:

I would suggest strengthening collaboration between schools and the city education office to share best practices and address common challenges. More frequent monitoring visits and follow-up support would help ensure timely implementation of recommendations. Providing more training and resources for school leaders and teachers would improve their capacity to meet quality standards. Establishing a digital reporting system could enhance data collection, analysis and feedback. Finally, encouraging community participation in school activities would promote accountability and create a

shared responsibility for improving education quality (*City School Quality Assurance Officer, Field data, 2025*).

For schools that fail to meet standards, the office offers one main form of assistance: professional development for teachers. No other support mechanism was described, which indicates a narrow repertoire. The officer's account of why professional development is relied upon was consistent with that emphasis:

As a Quality Assurance Officer, I believe professional development plays a key role in strengthening quality assurance in schools. It equips teachers and school leaders with updated skills, knowledge and strategies to meet curriculum and assessment standards. Continuous training also ensures staff are prepared to implement inspection recommendations effectively. Ultimately, professional development fosters a culture of improvement that directly enhances teaching quality and student outcomes (*City School Quality Assurance Officer, Field data, 2025*).

Notably, the officer's own list of improvements included a digital reporting system and closer inter-school collaboration, the two strategies on which teachers were most divided. The discussion addresses the divergence between the office's priorities and teachers' ratings.

Discussion

Three findings emerged. Teachers regard resourcing and training as the binding constraints on quality assurance and are divided on technology and collaboration. Heads of schools locate the problem in staffing and infrastructure and want external support delivered as coaching at the school rather than as inspection. The city quality assurance office identifies budget, timely policy information and follow-up on reports as its own limitations, and relies on professional development as its single instrument for helping weak schools. Each is discussed in turn.

A Resourcing Problem Rather than an Attitudinal One

The pattern in Table 2 is worth stating plainly: no strategy was rejected, and the two that ranked highest concerned money and training. Read through Total Quality Management, this points to process capability rather than to employee resistance (Evans & Lindsay, 2020). A process cannot outperform the staffing, funding and infrastructure available to it, and teachers appear to be reporting exactly that. This finding aligns with Mbuya and Amos (2024), who found internal quality assurance in Morogoro Municipality constrained by staffing shortages rather than teacher attitude, and it qualifies the emphasis in some of the literature on changing practitioner mindsets. In Dodoma City, mindset is not the obstacle.

The strong endorsement of training ($M = 3.99$) aligns with Kumari and Pandey (2025) on structured capacity building and with Damien and Claire (2022) on teacher preparedness as a correlate of learner performance. It also supports the continuous improvement proposition: teachers asked for ongoing development rather than a single briefing. The 75.3 per cent agreement on involving teachers in planning speaks to employee involvement, and its practical implication is straightforward. Where those who carry out a process help design how it is monitored, implementation fidelity improves, and resistance falls (Kigozi & On, 2020; Mursidi *et al.*, 2020). Fifteen teachers nonetheless disagreed, and the study cannot say whether their reservations concern the principle or the additional workload that participation would bring.

The two lowest-ranked strategies deserve more attention than their means alone suggest. Digital tools attracted the second-widest dissent, and inter-school collaboration the widest dispersion of all five items ($SD = 1.43$). The literature treats both as reliable levers for improvement: technology shortens the interval between observation and feedback (Samuel & Farrer, 2025), and benchmarking against other institutions accelerates improvement (Machumu & Agaptus, 2024). Teachers in Dodoma City were unpersuaded because of their limited exposure to both. Two of the seven heads of schools identified the absence of a computer laboratory and reliable internet as a constraint, and none described any collaborative arrangement with another school. Teachers were therefore rating instruments that most of them had not used. Divided responses to an unfamiliar strategy are not evidence against the strategy; they show missing enabling conditions, which is a different problem with a different remedy.

What Heads of Schools Want, and How They Want It Delivered?

Heads of schools converged on staffing, specifically appointing a permanent internal quality assurance officer rather than assigning the function to a teacher who already has a full timetable. This is the process capability argument again, from the other side of the same problem, and it closely matches Mbuya and Amos (2024). It also affects how internal quality assurance actually works. Where the role is unstaffed, the plan-do-check-act cycle described by Samuel and Farrer (2025) breaks at the check stage, because no one has protected time to conduct observations and record their outcomes.

More interesting than what heads asked for is how they wanted it delivered. They preferred on-site visits over centralised workshops, because coaching could then be adapted to the school. This directly echoes Makiya *et al.* (2022), who found that frequent visits, follow-up visits, prompt feedback, and

non-threatening language distinguished effective quality assurance support in Arusha. It also reframes the purpose of the visit. Heads were not asking for fewer inspections; they were asking for the visit to include developmental content, shifting the encounter from verification toward the improvement function that Odukoya (2025) treats as the second, often neglected, purpose of quality assurance.

The request for assistance with subject-level performance evaluation raises a standardisation point. Without common criteria, results from different schools cannot be compared, and the evidence base for targeted intervention weakens. Olowoselu (2024) makes a related argument: instructional leadership training enables heads of departments to use such evidence once it exists. Taken together, the two requests describe a system that has monitoring activity but not yet comparable monitoring data.

A Narrow Repertoire at System Level

The city office's account of its own limitations was candid, and its three priorities map onto recognisable weaknesses. An inadequate budget restricts inspection coverage and, in turn, the evidence available for targeting support. Delayed communication of curriculum and policy change leaves officers inspecting against superseded criteria, which erodes the credibility of the exercise in schools. Weak follow-up means the inspection report becomes a document rather than a decision. Mursidi *et al.* (2020) argue that a quality culture depends on this loop between evaluation, commitment, and action, and its absence would explain the school-level reports of delayed feedback noted in the introduction.

Against those three problems, the office reported a single instrument: professional development. That professional development matters are not in dispute, and the evidence linking teacher competence to learner attainment is substantial (Kassim *et al.*, 2024; Qingyan *et al.*, 2023). The difficulty is one of fit. Two of the three problems the office identified, budget and follow-up, are structural, and training cannot resolve them. Where a school fails to meet standards because it has no computer laboratory or because a subject has no qualified teacher, a workshop is the wrong instrument. A wider repertoire would include differentiated follow-up schedules for schools identified as at risk, brokered support between schools, and the ability to escalate resource problems to the council with evidence attached.

One divergence between the two strands deserves comment. The quality assurance officer named a digital reporting system and closer inter-school collaboration among the improvements needed, and these were precisely the two strategies on which teachers were most divided. The convergent parallel

design was intended to surface exactly this kind of contradiction. Read together with the heads' reports of missing connectivity, the divergence suggests a sequencing problem rather than a disagreement about direction: the office is proposing an information system for schools that do not yet reliably have the infrastructure to operate it. This tempers the recommendation, common in the literature, to digitalise quality assurance (Samuel & Farrer, 2025). Digitalisation is a reasonable objective, but connectivity and basic training have to precede it, or the reform will produce non-compliance that is then misread as resistance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Dodoma City are limited more by resources than by the disposition of those who implement them. Teachers endorsed all five strategies, ranking funding and training highest and returning divided verdicts only on digital tools and inter-school collaboration, the two strategies in which their schools have the least experience. Heads of schools identified staffing and infrastructure constraints and asked for external support to arrive as coaching at the school rather than inspection alone. The city quality assurance office identified budget, delayed policy information and weak follow-up on inspection reports as its own limitations, yet relies on professional development as its only instrument for assisting schools that fall short. The three accounts agree on the diagnosis, which is unusual and useful: the practices exist but are under-resourced, unevenly staffed and rarely closed by follow-up.

Four recommendations follow. School management should institutionalise internal classroom observation by setting a published timetable, a standard observation record and a documented feedback loop, so that monitoring does not depend on the initiative of an individual head of school. The city education office should redirect part of its support toward school-based coaching and common criteria for subject-level performance evaluation. It should communicate curriculum and policy changes to quality assurance officers before, rather than after, the inspection cycle. Councils and the Ministry should treat the appointment of a dedicated internal quality assurance officer in every school, and connectivity in schools expected to report digitally, as prerequisites for the reforms already set out in policy rather than as later refinements. Further research should test these findings on a larger, more mixed sample, since a study of seven urban schools cannot establish how far the pattern holds in rural districts where resource constraints are typically sharper.

Limitations of the Study

Three limitations qualify these findings. The study covered seven public secondary schools in a single urban council, so the results describe Dodoma City and cannot be generalised to rural districts or to private schools. The quantitative strand measured perceptions of what would strengthen quality assurance, not the effect of any strategy on attainment, so it makes no causal claim about academic performance. Finally, the system-level account rests on a small number of key informants, which is appropriate given how few officials hold these posts but limits how far their views can be treated as representative of city administration generally.

Declarations

Conflict of interest: The first author is employed by Dodoma City Council, the jurisdiction in which the study was conducted. To limit any influence on the data, she did not participate in selecting the participating schools, and she interviewed city education officials using the same guide as all other interviews.

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Data availability: anonymised data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Manuscript Preparation - JIPE

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Page set-up of the manuscripts should be on A4 or 8.5" x 11 "paper, typed double-spaced (24-26 lines per page), with margins of top 25mm, bottom 25mm left 40mm and right 20mm.

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The font size of main text shall be 12 in Times New Roman

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This page must include the following information:

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The first page following the title page should contain an abstract. Abstract should contain up to 250 words mainly of the object and main findings of the paper. Three to five keywords representing concepts of the paper may be written at the end of the abstract. The Abstract shall be in *italics*.

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Introduction: Should describe the objective of the reported work and provide relevant background information.

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of tables and figures is allowed, but the use of text to emphasize important points is encouraged.

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