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THE SCHOOL HEADS` SUPERVISORY ROLES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES: A CASE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF IRINGA, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to investigate how secondary school heads oversee their staff members, apply quality assurance procedures, and how their supervision affects students' academic achievement. School supervision and quality verification programs have become pressing issues in different countries, where educational systems have undergone significant changes. The research employed an illustrative case study approach and a purposive sampling method to pick ten internal quality assurer teachers, five academic office teachers, and two school administrators. The results showed that the majority of secondary school teachers are *unaware of the supervisory role* of their school leaders. Even though teachers are largely unaware of the supervisory side of their leaders' roles, quality assurance in schools improves because those leaders are actively guiding the implementation of procedures and protocols meant to maintain and improve educational quality. The report advised that school administrators receive training in school supervision promptly upon appointment, and it also advocated for on-the-job training for teachers, emphasizing that teacher employment should be based on meritocracy.

KEYWORDS: internal quality assurers, School supervision, school quality assurance practices, supervisory roles, secondary schools, teachers, school heads

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INTRODUCTION

Supervisory oversight of schools is essential to any educational system because it guarantees high-quality instruction and learning by bringing together students, parents, and government officials. A lot of the time, parents are the most helpful of them, collaborating closely with school officials to make their children's education better (Burra & Fanuel, 2021). To foster a culture of collaboration that supports academic achievement and responsibility, school leaders are crucial.

In education, supervision is helping to keep things running well in the classroom by keeping an eye on teachers, grading assignments, and solving problems as they arise. Enhancing teaching efficacy and student results is the goal of this process, which includes mentorship, observation, and feedback (Burhanudin et al., 2020; De Castro & Jimenez, 2022). According to Burhanudin et al. (2020), school supervision covers a lot of ground, including teacher discipline, collegial relationships, emotional environment, behavior control, and school morale. English "supervision" literally means "to oversee" because it comes from the Latin words "super" meaning "above" and "videre" meaning "to see" (Enock et al., 2013).

Standards of excellence in education cannot be sustained without educational monitoring. According to Msuya and Mwila (2023), supervision enables leadership, professional advice, and performance feedback for instructors, which promotes progress on an individual and institutional level. In a similar vein, Mwesiga and Okendo (2018) stress the importance of good supervision in promoting policy adherence, ongoing professional development for educators, and higher end results for students.

HISTORICAL AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

An external inspection was the principal method of school supervision in Tanzania during the colonial era. School administration, curriculum execution, and instructor effectiveness were all subject to visits by designated community members and local officials (Ghavifekr & Sani Ibrahim, 2014; Faustino & Muneja, 2023). The emphasis shifted from religious or local leaders to professional educators in the late 19th century, when they started to take over supervisory responsibilities at schools and in the classroom (Sayuti et al., 2020; Arogundade & Belo, 2019; Agapiti & Kitula, 2022).

A more inclusive and collaborative framework called school quality assurance has replaced the old inspection paradigm in recent decades. This new model places an emphasis on professional support, self-evaluation, and continual development rather than finding fault (Shahanga et al., 2021; Awe, 2021). With the launch of the School Quality Assurance Unit in 2017, Tanzania took a giant leap forward in its collaborative evaluation processes, with the goal of improving education by keeping a close eye on classroom instruction, facilities, and administration.

SCHOOL HEADS' SUPERVISORY ROLES

The supervision role at the school level is largely carried out by the head of the school. They are responsible for a variety of tasks, including but not limited to: assessing teachers' effectiveness, providing guidance to new hires, coordinating classroom strategies, and checking that learning outcomes are met (Hoque et al., 2020; IIEP, 2011). Both student achievement and faculty output are strongly impacted by how well school administrators oversee their staff. Poor accountability and educational quality might result from uninspiring or hands-off monitoring (Ngole & Gerold Mkulu, 2021). Supportive and autonomous supervision, on the other hand, encourages professional development, policy compliance, and constant enhancement (Guardacasa & Benavides, 2020).

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QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES

The term "school quality assurance" (SQA) is a set of procedures put in place to make sure that schools are effective in what they teach (Asuquo & Onyinye, 2022). Accreditation procedures, external validation, and internal self-evaluation are all part of these measures. For instance, Malaysia's quality assurance framework encourages introspection and institutional growth through its emphasis on a continual Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (P-I-E) cycle (Makin et al., 2018; Kinjawan et al., 2020; Ghavifekr & Sani Ibrahim, 2014). In a similar vein, nations all around the globe are implementing these policies in an effort to soften their inspection processes and replace them with more accommodating ones (Harmandeep & Arjinder, 2013). The educational reforms implemented in Tanzania since 2016 mirror this worldwide trend. Secondary schools are urged to participate in group self-evaluations and put improvement strategies based on inspectors' comments through the Quality Assurance Unit. Nonetheless, there has been little research into how the new quality assurance system affects the supervisorial responsibilities of school heads, especially with regard to the effects on secondary school students' learning and instruction in Tanzania.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While there have been many theoretical and empirical investigations into the relationship between school supervision and quality assurance in general (e.g., Burhanudin et al., 2020; Makin et al., 2018; Ngole & Gerold Mkulu, 2021), very little has concentrated on the ways in which Tanzanian school principals carry out their supervisorial duties within the context of contemporary quality assurance measures. Few studies have examined the new leadership qualities and collaborative behaviors needed to make the transition from traditional inspection to participatory quality assurance in Tanzania, particularly in the Iringa Region.
By investigating the impact of school administrators' supervisory responsibilities on classroom instruction quality, this study fills a crucial empirical need. The results should help educational administrators, practitioners, and policymakers better understand how to implement effective supervision procedures to raise student achievement and advance national education objectives.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the supervisory roles of school heads and their impact on teaching and learning outcomes in secondary schools of Iringa, Tanzania.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explore stakeholders' perceptions of school heads' supervisory roles in secondary schools of Iringa, Tanzania.
2. To assess the impact of school heads' supervision on teaching and learning outcomes in secondary schools of Iringa, Tanzania.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do education stakeholders perceive the supervisory roles of school heads in secondary schools of Iringa, Tanzania?
2. What is the impact of school heads' supervision on teaching and learning outcomes in secondary schools of Iringa, Tanzania?

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS AND THE SCHOOL HEADS' SUPERVISORY ROLE

In order to make sure that teachers are involved in quality assurance procedures, school administrators make sure that teachers have all the resources they need to teach and learn. In addition to clearly communicating requirements for teachers' methods, they cultivate an environment that is supportive and collaborative for educators (Agapiti & Kitula, 2022; Guardacasa & Benavides, 2020). Agapiti and Kitula (2022) state that educators keep the skills and knowledge needed to assess reform initiatives in education and curricula.

In Tanzania, the president's office for regional administration and local government and the ministry of education, science, and technology are in charge of supervising schools (PORALG). These organizations work together to improve public schools and neighborhoods (Allais, 2014; Shahanga et al., 2021). School heads are now responsible for overseeing their own schools and are given the authority to handle any issues that arise from this role (Tomasevski, 2001).

Although there are school administrators that work well with their assistants, most of them instead focus on other administrative tasks and give their helpers complete supervision. Evidence from studies like Ghavifekr and Sani Ibrahim (2014) and Makin et al. (2018) suggests that school administrators are often responsible for managing the institution, overseeing the construction of curricula, addressing financial concerns, and interacting with parents and the community. The large number of assistants that school principals have allows them to avoid their supervisory duties, claim Ghavifekr and Sani Ibrahim (2014). Many assistant heads and one to five deputy heads are common in secondary schools across the globe. Each deputy head is responsible for a certain department within the school (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014).

Ngole and Mkulu (2021) reference Mbezi as saying that Tanzania still has problems with oversight. Some of these issues include insufficient training, students' negative perceptions of supervision, school administrators' lack of expertise, and insufficient funding to assist supervision. It is not implemented properly, even though monitoring is a requirement in any educational institution. Finding out how well school principals in Iringa, Tanzania, carry out their supervisory responsibilities in relation to quality assurance methodologies in secondary schools is the primary goal of this research.

SCHOOL HEADS' SUPERVISION AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The head of the school has a substantial impact on the improvement of instruction and the standard of education through his or her supervising role. The importance of school leaders' supervisory responsibilities in establishing quality assurance processes in secondary schools and encouraging student engagement in instructional monitoring has been argued for by Makin et al. (2018) and Guardacasa and Benavides (2020).

New research backs up this claim. As an example, Hoque et al. (2020) discovered that secondary school teachers in Malaysia are more motivated and accountable when they are well-supervised. In a similar vein, Msuya and Mwila (2023) and Medard and Mwila (2022) found that students in Tanzanian schools benefited from consistent supervisory input, which led to better results overall. The need of having good supervisory leadership to maintain quality education is shown by these findings.

RESEARCH GAP

Regardless of the policy focus, it is unclear whether the supervisorial positions of school leaders in Tanzanian secondary schools effectively provide quality assurance methods. Both the 1995 and 2014 policy revisions further strengthened processes for school quality assurance, while the 1978 Education Act of Tanzania placed a focus on oversight (Education Act, 1978; Mbezi, 2016). On the other hand, problems with providing a high-quality education exist since oversight is insufficient (Medard & Mwila, 2022; Msuya & Mwila, 2023; Shahanga et al., 2021).

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Prior research on school supervision and quality assurance has mostly focused on Malaysia (e.g., Ghavifekr and Sani Ibrahim (2014), Nigeria (Asuquo and Emeribe (2019), Ayeni (2012), and Okunloye et al. (2019), and Nigeria (Janib et al., 2021), and Okunloye et al. (2018)). Cilliers and Habyarimana (2020), Lawrent (2019), Mbezi (2016), Medard and Mwila (2022), Mwesiga and Okendo (2018), and Njihia and Chilumika (2021) are among the few studies that have dealt with Tanzanian contexts, and even those studies have rarely focused on school quality assurance techniques.

Consequently, this research seeks to assess the efficacy of secondary school principals' supervisorial responsibilities in relation to quality assurance practices in Iringa, Tanzania, by collecting perspectives and insights from important stakeholders regarding the influence of these responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

An illustrative case study approach was used in this research, which permits a thorough investigation of a real-life situation inside a particular social or institutional structure. A case study that serves to illustrate a larger issue or phenomena is described and understood via the lens of a specific program, event, or institution (Kumari and Sciences, 2022; Chien, 2019). The purpose of illustrative case studies, as pointed out by Crossman (2019), is to provide light on the interpersonal dynamics at work in a certain setting.

School administrators' supervisory responsibilities and the efficacy of their methods in guaranteeing school quality assurance were thus thoroughly investigated using a case study approach, which was considered suitable for the present study. To gain a complete picture of the phenomenon, the design made it possible to gather specific, contextual data (Creswell, 2012; Kothari, 2004).

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The study employed a purposive sampling technique, which is widely used in qualitative research to select participants who possess specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research problem (Creswell, 2012; Mik-Meyer, 2021). A total of 17 participants were selected, comprising ten (10) internal quality assurer teachers, five (5) teachers from academic offices, and two (2) school heads.

The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where no new information or themes emerge from additional participants (Creswell, 2012). The selected participants were considered adequate to provide rich and varied insights into the supervisory roles of school heads and their contribution to quality assurance practices. The inclusion of teachers and administrators ensured representation of multiple perspectives within the school system.

METHODS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION

The researcher was able to glean richer insights from the participants' open and honest descriptions of their experiences and perspectives thanks to the use of semi-structured interviews (Mik-Meyer, 2021). Interviews were carried out in a private, non-threatening environment within the school grounds to guarantee participants' ease and privacy. Depending on the participant's preference, each interview was performed in either English or Swahili and lasted around 30 to 45 minutes.

We obtained participants' authorization to audio-record all interviews, and then we transcribed them word-for-word so we could analyze them. Before the interviews started, participants were informed about the study's goals, their ability to withdraw at any point, and the steps used to protect their anonymity. The relevant institutional review board gave their

stamp of approval, and the local education authorities authorized entry to the schools. To ensure their anonymity, participants were given codes rather than names.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The study employed thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and interpret recurring patterns (themes) within the qualitative data. This approach offers flexibility and can be applied in both exploratory and confirmatory research contexts (Creswell, 2012; Kothari, 2004). The process involved several stages: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review and refinement of themes, and final interpretation.

Following Allais (2014), thematic analysis was chosen because it provides a systematic framework for managing qualitative data and offers methodological flexibility suitable for studies exploring human perceptions and experiences.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure validity and reliability (referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative research), the study adhered to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

- Credibility was ensured through member checking, where participants were given summaries of their interview transcripts to confirm accuracy.
- Transferability was supported by providing rich, thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and processes, allowing readers to assess applicability in other settings.
- Dependability was enhanced through an audit trail, documenting all research procedures, decisions, and changes made throughout the process.
- Confirmability was achieved by maintaining a reflexive journal and seeking peer debriefing from academic colleagues to minimize researcher bias.

RESULTS

Data presentation of this study focused on the research questions and has been presented into three parts; the first part is the number of responses of the interviews, and personal information of participants, the second part focuses on stakeholders' perceptions on the school heads supervisory role in secondary schools and the last part is on how school heads' supervision impact students' academic performance.

DATA AND RESULTS PRESENTATION

In presenting the interview data, the English language was used. To maintain participants' voices from interviews, direct quotations of participants' words and language have been used to retain the meaning of words and the authenticity of statements given by participants. Again, to ensure ethics symbols are established to be used instead of the respondents` names. The study used six (6) Internal Schools Quality Assurance Respondents (ISQAR), and the respondents were given numbers 1 to 6 to hide their names. It uses "ISQAR1" to represent the respondent number 6, mean Internal Schools Quality Assurance Respondent 1 to respondent number 6. Additionally, two Academic teachers were identified by "ATR1" (Academic Teacher Respondent One) and "ATR2" (Academic Teacher Respondent Two). For the heads of schools, the identities were established as "HSR1" (Head of School Respondent One) and "HSR2" (Head of School Respondent Two).

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DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

Knowledge about the supervisory responsibilities of secondary school principals and school quality assurance techniques is influenced by demographic characteristics, including gender and years of teaching experience.
The internal school quality assurance team consisted of four men and two women. When it came to academic professors and school heads, both sexes were represented equally. Two have been with the company for 1–9 years, three have been with 10–19 years, and one has been in the field for 20–30 years out of six quality assurance professionals at internal schools. The academic office participants' job experience ranged from one to twenty years, while the school heads' experience ranged from ten to thirty years. Based on participant demographics, it appears that the study produced trustworthy results because the participants had favorable experiences.

STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE SCHOOL HEADS' SUPERVISORY ROLE

The findings revealed that school heads play multiple supervisory roles encompassing administrative, supportive, and democratic functions.

Administrative Role:
Heads of schools were perceived as the overall authority responsible for daily operations.
"The head of school is overall in charge of the school; he supervises the performance of students' efficiency and effectiveness." (ISQAR1)

Supportive Role:
Participants noted that school heads provide pedagogical support, mentorship, and necessary facilities.
"I support teachers by reviewing their strategies and sitting with them to discuss effective methods of teaching and learning." (HSR2)

Democratization Role:
Respondents emphasized participatory decision-making and shared leadership.
"In our school, we have a democratic kind of supervision in the sense that we are involved in all matters relating to our school." (ISQAR6)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ROLE

Heads of schools encourage ongoing professional growth through seminars and workshops.
"Our head of school provides opportunities to attend seminars to enhance our professions." (ATR1)
"When seminars are organised at the district level, a school head selects certain teachers from specific disciplines to participate." (ISQAR3)

Synthesis:
Overall, stakeholders viewed the school heads as both supervisors and mentors who ensure effective instruction, guide professional development, and encourage shared decision-making. While most participants emphasized supportive and democratic practices, a few highlighted challenges related to limited resources and time constraints for follow-up supervision. These patterns suggest that effective supervision blends accountability with collegial support, strengthening school quality assurance.

The findings indicated that the supervision practices of school heads significantly influence students' academic outcomes.
"The head of school serves as a mentor who shares knowledge and expertise with teachers and students, which ultimately leads to improved performance." (ATR1)
"The head of school provides direction and analyses the teaching and learning situation to identify opportunities and challenges." (ISQAR2)
Respondents also noted that heads' supervision enhances discipline, remedial programs, and adherence to the timetable, contributing to improved student results.
"Through supervision of the school head, the introduction and close monitoring of remedial classes ensured that students adhered to the timetable, improving performance." (ISQAR2)
Another respondent reinforced that supervision fosters reflective practice and performance evaluation.
"School head supervision and quality assurance practices encourage us to evaluate teachers and students, identify weaknesses, and improve teaching strategies for better results." (ISQAR1)

Synthesis**:**
Participants consistently linked effective supervision with higher student achievement. School heads who regularly monitor teaching, mentor teachers, and maintain open communication positively influence instructional quality and student discipline. However, some respondents expressed that the effectiveness of supervision depends on available resources and the cooperation of staff.
For the clarity of the study, a table is provided below that organizes themes, sub-themes, and the quotations from which the participants explained themselves during the interview. As shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. List of Respondents' themes, subthemes, quotations, and references

Themes	**Sub-Themes**	**Illustrative Quotation**	**Respondent**
Stakeholders' perceptions of the school heads' supervisory role	Overall in charge of school activities	"The Head of School is overall in charge of the school and supervises the responsibility and performance of students' efficiency and effectiveness."	ISQAR1
	Supportive supervision role	"I support teachers through reviewing all the strategies and advising them on effective teaching and learning methods."	HSR2
	Democratization role	"In our school, we have a democratic kind of supervision in the sense that we are involved in all matters relating to our school."	ISQAR6
	Mentorship role	"The head of school serves as the mentor who shares knowledge and expertise with teachers as well as students."	ATR1
Impact of school heads' supervision on students' academic performance	Provides direction	"The head of school provides direction and analyses the teaching and learning situation to identify opportunities and challenges."	ISQAR2
	Shapes student performance	"Supervision of the school head helped shape students through	ISQAR2

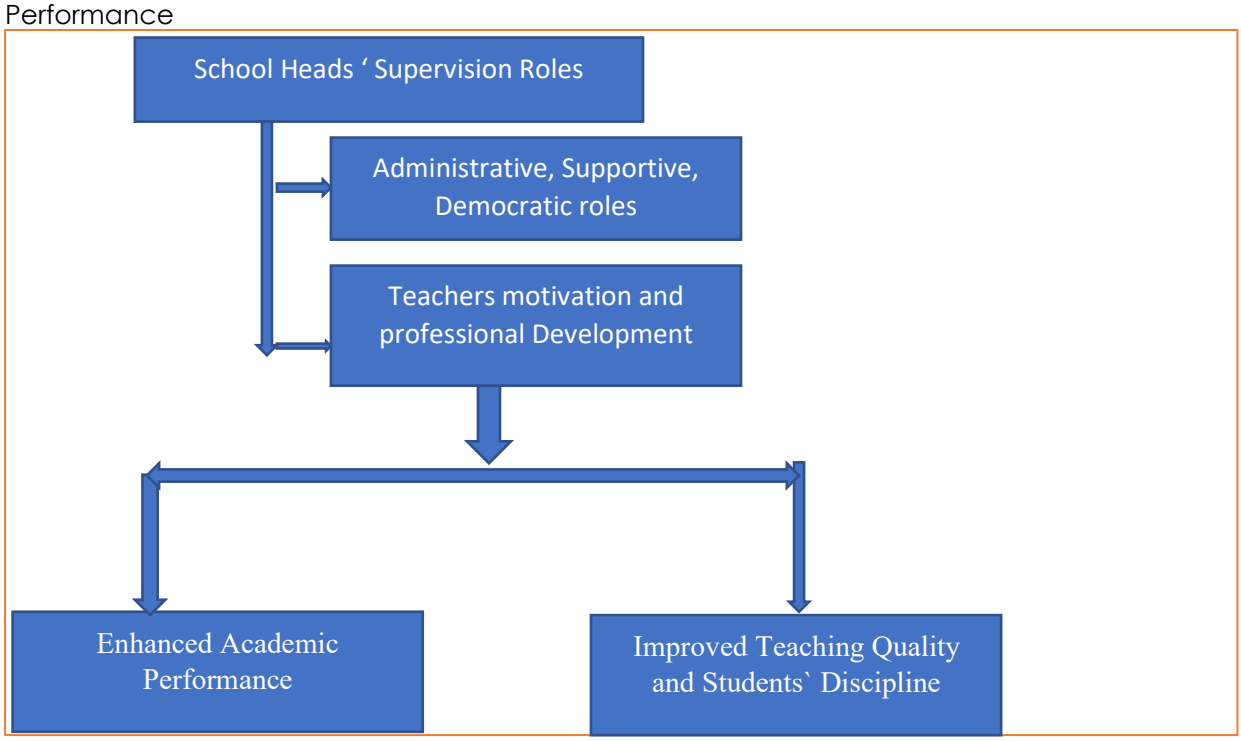
Themes	Sub-Themes	Illustrative Quotation	Respondent
		remedial classes and adherence to timetables, improving performance."	

sources: Author

Summary Linked to Research Questions

RQ1: What are stakeholders' perceptions of the school heads' supervisory roles in secondary schools?
Stakeholders perceived the supervisory role as multifaceted encompassing administrative oversight, supportive mentoring, and participatory decision-making. The findings highlight that when school heads adopt democratic and supportive supervision, teachers become more motivated and professionally engaged.
RQ2: How does the supervision of school heads impact students' academic performance?
School head supervision was found to enhance student achievement through improved teaching effectiveness, structured follow-up, and discipline. The mentoring and evaluative roles of heads of schools contribute directly to academic growth and school improvement.

Figure 1. Thematic Map: Relationship Between School Head Supervision and Academic Performance



Interpretation:
The thematic map illustrates the interconnected pathways through which school heads' supervision influences teaching quality and, consequently, student performance. Effective supervision strengthens teacher capacity, fosters accountability, and drives academic success.

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DISCUSSION

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study support and extend existing theories of educational supervision, including Transformational Leadership and Instructional Leadership. School heads who actively mentor and guide teachers and students positively influence academic outcomes. However, the study highlights that leadership style alone is insufficient; without formal supervisory practices such as structured monitoring, feedback, and professional development, the impact on teaching quality and student performance remains limited. This underscores the importance of integrating leadership theory with practical supervision strategies to enhance educational outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the study emphasizes the need for capacity building initiatives for school heads, including targeted training in instructional monitoring, mentorship, and evaluation techniques. Structured mentorship programs and participatory supervision approaches, where teachers engage in decision-making and evaluation, can improve teacher motivation, professional growth, and student achievement. These practices align with quality assurance frameworks that stress continuous improvement and accountability in school management.

The findings also have implications for policymakers and teacher training institutions. Policies should formalize supervision standards and embed mechanisms for continuous feedback, collaborative oversight, and teacher support. Teacher education programs should incorporate modules on supervisory roles, instructional leadership, and quality assurance practices to prepare future educators to contribute effectively to school supervision. Implementing these interventions can bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring sustainable improvements in teaching quality and students' academic performance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study fills a critical gap in the literature by examining the effectiveness of school heads' supervisory roles in secondary schools in Iringa, Ta nzania, an area where little research has explored the direct impact on teaching quality, teacher professional development, and student academic performance. By capturing stakeholders' perspectives, the study provides empirical evidence on which supervisory practices promote quality assurance and highlights areas requiring improvement. The findings offer practical guidance for school heads, teachers, and quality assurance personnel, informing professional development programs, mentorship initiatives, and internal school policies. Moreover, at the regional and national level, the study can inform education policymakers in developing standardized supervision guidelines, quality assurance frameworks, and teacher training curricula, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education and improving student outcomes across Tanzania.

CONCLUSION

The majority of academic staff, including teachers and administrators at secondary schools in Iringa, Tanzania, exhibit limited supervisory competence and understanding. However, the study revealed a strong willingness among participants to grasp the true nature of educational supervision. They recognized its critical importance in a context where all educational programs are formalized to guarantee quality for stakeholders. To enhance educational standards, school leaders and educators must integrate supervisory skills with established quality assurance procedures. Nevertheless, in contrast to the findings of the current study,

existing evidence suggests that most school staff and administrators continue to rely on conventional leadership practices when performing supervisory functions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to this study. There are no financial ties such as employment, consultancy, grants, stock ownership, patent applications, or other affiliations that could have influenced the design, execution, interpretation, or reporting of the research.

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