

Quality assurance as a management tool for attaining excellence in primary education

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Quality Assurance system at primary school level was examined and assessed to find out the extent to which it is effectively enforced for realization of high quality education. The study sought to find out minimum standards of knowledge, skills and experiences expected of managers and teachers; processes primary schools use for realizing expected level of learning and recommend desirable improvements on the quality assurance system for attaining excellence in primary education.

A sample of 284 respondents from six primary schools in Arusha and Kinondoni districts provided the requisite data. Data were obtained through questionnaires, semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, documentary review and classroom observation. Qualitative data were subjected to content analysis while quantitative data were categorized and presented in tabular form.

Findings indicated that most sample schools did not have a manifest vision; public schools faced a shortage of teachers and basic inputs such as textbooks, wall maps and charts. Content mastery of primary school teachers was poor, especially in English and Vocational skills. It was also found out that high students' performance was contributed by the use of proper teaching [learning methods as well as school practices. Stakeholders were not satisfied with primary school outputs and outcomes as school leavers completed while very young and did not have the requisite skills that would make them useful members of the community. It is concluded that schools had quality assurance system in place but it was not effectively enforced for realization of high quality primary education.

It is recommended that school managers and teachers be trained on the process of developing a sound vision; teacher recruitment should be decentralized to district level; INSET courses be provided regularly to teachers and training of competent vocational skills subject teachers be given serious consideration in order to provide the intended skills to students.