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Assessment of the Perceived Skills of Internal School Quality Assurers in Implementing Internal School Quality Assurance Practices in Secondary Schools in Misungwi District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Quality education remains a pressing challenge across many developing countries, including Tanzania, where disparities in resources and management undermine learning outcomes. To address this, Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) mechanisms were introduced to ensure compliance with standards and promote continuous improvement. However, questions persist regarding the skills of Internal School Quality Assurers (ISQAs) in executing these practices. This study assessed the perceived skills of ISQAs in implementing ISQA practices in Misungwi District, Mwanza, Tanzania. Guided by Behaviourism Theory, the study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive design. Data were collected from a sample of 63 respondents, comprising heads of schools, academic teachers, classroom teachers, and school quality assurance committee members, selected through purposive and stratified sampling. Structured questionnaires provided data which were analysed using SPSS version 21, with descriptive statistics summarising responses and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) reducing variables into skill domains. The results revealed four dominant skill clusters: monitoring, assessment, planning, and evaluation. Monitoring and assessment emerged as the strongest domains, with ISQAs excelling in classroom observation, lesson note review, and use of data to assess school performance. Planning skills were moderate, showing competence in integrating stakeholder feedback and prioritising school improvement, though weaker in goal setting. Evaluation was the least developed skill, with ISQAs struggling to connect findings to teacher professional development and broader school strategies. These findings align with prior studies in Tanzania and other African contexts, which consistently report monitoring strengths but weaknesses in evaluation and planning. The study concludes that ISQAs in Misungwi are effective in supervision and assessment but less equipped for strategic planning and developmental evaluation. It recommends strengthening ISQA capacity through continuous professional development, integration of digital tools for data-driven decision-making, participatory planning processes, and systematic use of evaluation findings to inform teacher training and long-term school improvement.

Keywords: Internal School Quality Assurance, perceived skills.

Introduction

Education is globally recognized as a foundation for human development and economic growth, and its quality is central to achieving social progress. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education, yet many developing countries continue to struggle with disparities in learning outcomes. In Sub-Saharan Africa, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and weak accountability frameworks undermine education systems, making the attainment of high-quality education particularly difficult. These challenges call for more effective strategies to ensure that teaching and learning standards are consistently upheld.

In Tanzania, the pursuit of quality education has been constrained by limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, poorly prepared teachers, and uneven school management. Traditional external inspection systems were often criticized for being punitive, irregular, and disconnected from the daily realities of schools. To address these shortcomings, the government introduced Internal School Quality Assurance (ISQA) as a school-based and developmental mechanism to improve accountability and foster continuous improvement. Unlike inspection, ISQA emphasizes supportive processes such as classroom observation, data-based assessment, participatory planning, and systematic evaluation, making it an integral part of school management and professional growth.

Internal School Quality Assurers (ISQAs) are central to the success of this reform. They are tasked not only with enforcing compliance to curriculum and policy standards but also with fostering a culture of reflection and collaboration among teachers. Their effectiveness depends on their skills in monitoring, assessment, planning, and evaluation. However, existing research indicates that while ISQAs are relatively strong in monitoring and assessment, they are weaker in planning and evaluation, particularly in connecting evaluation results with teacher professional development and long-term school improvement. This imbalance raises concerns about whether ISQA is functioning as intended or risks becoming another bureaucratic exercise.

Misungwi District in Mwanza Region provides a relevant context for studying this issue, as its schools face challenges typical of many Tanzanian districts, including large enrolments, limited infrastructure, and resource shortages. Yet, there is little empirical evidence assessing the competencies of ISQAs in such environments. This study therefore aimed to assess the perceived skills of ISQAs in implementing ISQA practices in Misungwi District secondary schools. By analysing their strengths and weaknesses in monitoring, assessment, planning, and evaluation, the study contributes to filling an important gap in the literature and offers evidence-based recommendations to enhance ISQA as a mechanism for improving the quality of education in Tanzania.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored in **Behaviourism Theory**, which emphasizes that human behaviour is shaped by external stimuli and reinforcement (Watson, 1913; Skinner, 1953). In the educational context, behaviourism highlights how teacher practices can be shaped through structured monitoring, feedback, and corrective measures. ISQA processes, including classroom observations, lesson reviews, performance audits, and reinforcement of effective teaching behaviours, embody behaviourist principles. By rewarding desired practices and discouraging inefficiencies, behaviourism provides a strong foundation for analysing the ways in which ISQAs influence teaching and learning outcomes.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies from different countries demonstrate both strengths and weaknesses in ISQA practices. Lee and Kim (2019) in South Korea observed that ISQAs were effective in assessment and leadership but constrained by weak digital literacy. Akinpelu and Ogunyemi (2020) in Nigeria found ISQAs knowledgeable in technical aspects but lacking in communication and leadership, which limited stakeholder engagement. Mthiyane (2018) in South Africa reported that while ISQAs displayed strong subject knowledge, they were less effective in mentoring and data-driven decision-making due to insufficient training. Kokou (2021) in Togo noted that ISQAs carried out administrative tasks but struggled with pedagogical evaluation and curriculum assessment, reflecting a lack of specialised training. Boachie and Owusu (2021) in Ghana also found that ISQAs understood the concept of quality assurance but lacked frameworks and tools for systematic monitoring and evaluation.

In Tanzania, Mkumbo and Binaisa (2021) established that ISQAs were competent in monitoring but struggled in curriculum assessment and providing actionable feedback. Ng'hoboko and Mrema (2024) stressed the limited integration of evaluation findings into teacher development, while Fungilwa (2021) and Lyimo (2023) highlighted persistent weaknesses in planning and data use. Malima (2022) and Temu (2023) argued that the absence of clear goal-setting mechanisms reduced the effectiveness of ISQA plans, while Mgonja (2021), Kilave (2022), and Ntobesya (2023) found that evaluation was often compliance-oriented rather than developmental. Hasanah et al. (2025) added that ISQAs tended to focus on immediate supervisory tasks while neglecting long-term strategic planning. Collectively, these studies reveal a consistent pattern across contexts: ISQAs are relatively strong in monitoring and assessment but less skilled in planning and evaluation. This study extends this discussion by offering fresh evidence from Misungwi District.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted in Misungwi District, Mwanza Region, Tanzania, using a quantitative approach with a descriptive design to capture measurable perceptions of ISQAs' skills. The population included 1,026 individuals comprising heads of schools, academic teachers, classroom teachers, and quality assurance committee members. From this, a sample of 63 respondents was selected through purposive and stratified sampling to ensure inclusion of key decision-makers and diversity across schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires with closed-ended and Likert-scale items, which focused on monitoring, assessment, planning, and evaluation skills. The data were analysed using SPSS version 21, with descriptive statistics summarising responses and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) reducing variables into four major skill domains. Validity was ensured through triangulation and statistical checks, while reliability was strengthened using internal consistency measures. Ethical clearance and permissions were obtained from the University of Iringa, the Mwanza Regional Administrative Secretary, the Misungwi District Administrative Secretary, and the District Education Director. All respondents participated voluntarily with informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity assured.

FINDINGS

Perceived Skills of Internal School Quality Assurers in Implementing Internal Quality Practices

This section assessed the perceived skills of Internal School Quality Assurers (ISQAs) in implementing Internal Quality Practices (IQPs) within secondary schools. The analysis evaluated data suitability for factor analysis, reviewed the total variance explained, and examined the scree plot. It further identified four main areas of perceived skills, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning, and Evaluation using rotated component analysis.

The findings provided insight into which skill domains were perceived as strong and which were seen as needing improvement. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) revealed a set of distinct yet related skill areas that were viewed as essential for the effective implementation of internal quality assurance processes.

Data Suitability for Factor Analysis

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.644
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	781.030
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

Before applying Principal Component Analysis (PCA), it was important to check whether the data met basic requirements for factor analysis. Two tests were used: The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

The KMO value for this study was 0.644, which is considered "mediocre" but still acceptable for PCA. A value above 0.60 suggests that the items in the dataset are related well enough to be grouped into meaningful components. If the KMO value had been much lower, it would have meant that the variables were not sufficiently related to each other for factor analysis to be useful.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also run to see if there were enough relationships among the variables. The result was significant (Chi-square = 781.030, df = 190, $p < 0.001$), which means the dataset did not resemble an identity matrix (where variables are completely uncorrelated). In other words, there were statistically significant correlations among the variables, which is a necessary condition for performing factor analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.297	31.484	31.484	4.280	21.400	21.400
2	3.063	15.315	46.799	2.603	13.016	34.416
3	1.533	7.667	54.465	1.886	9.429	43.845
4	1.291	6.453	60.918	1.865	9.327	53.172
5	1.164	5.820	66.739	1.685	8.424	61.596
6	1.087	5.436	72.175	1.602	8.010	69.606
7	1.008	5.042	77.217	1.522	7.611	77.217
8	.903	4.515	81.732			
9	.666	3.331	85.063			
10	.546	2.730	87.794			
11	.523	2.614	90.407			
12	.493	2.465	92.873			
13	.374	1.870	94.742			
14	.282	1.411	96.153			
15	.260	1.302	97.455			
16	.184	.921	98.376			
17	.132	.660	99.036			
18	.084	.420	99.456			
19	.074	.369	99.825			
20	.035	.175	100.000			

Source: Field Data, 2025

After confirming that the dataset met the necessary conditions for analysis, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was applied to explore how ISQAs' perceived skills could be grouped into meaningful categories. The decision on how many components to retain was guided by the standard criterion of keeping only those with eigenvalues greater than one. This approach helps to ensure that only components explaining a substantial portion of the data are included. To improve the clarity and usefulness of the results, a Varimax rotation was also performed.

The analysis produced seven components, each with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0. Combined, these seven components accounted for 77.217% of the total variance in the responses. In the context of social science research, this is considered a high percentage and suggests that the majority of the important patterns in the data were captured by these components. This indicates that the structure of perceived skills among ISQAs is both strong and well-defined.

Among the components, the first alone explained 31.484% of the total variance, making it the most dominant in the dataset. The second and third components contributed 15.315% and 7.667% respectively, while the remaining four components each explained between 5.042% and 6.453%. These results show that the skills perceived to be held by ISQAs are spread across several distinct areas rather than being concentrated in a single domain.

This spread of variance suggests that effective internal quality assurance work draws upon a wide range of skills. The seven components likely reflect domains such as monitoring, assessment, planning, and evaluation, each playing a role in how ISQAs contribute to improving school performance. Understanding how these skills are grouped helps to clarify the structure of ISQA competencies and provides insight into the areas that are most prominent in practice.
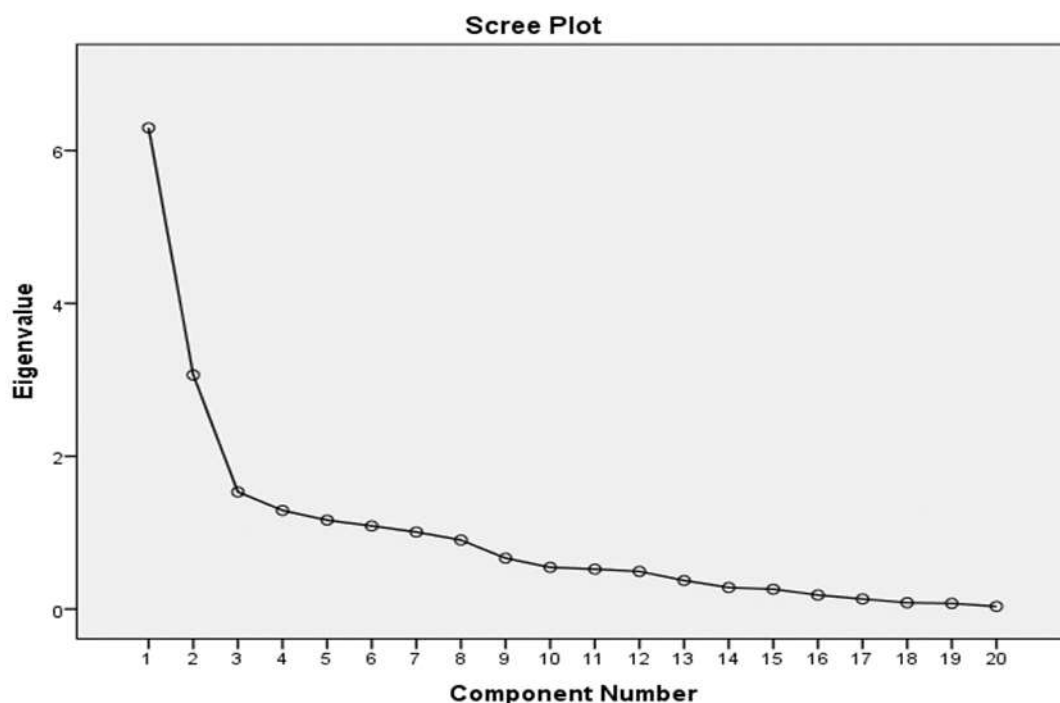
Scree Plot of Principal Components

Figure 1: Scree Plot of Principal Components

Source: Field Data, 2025

The scree plot shows a steep decline in eigenvalues after the first few components. This visual drop represents a shift in the amount of explained variance, signalling the point beyond which additional components contribute minimally to the model.

A clear levelling off occurs after the seventh component, supporting the retention of seven components for further interpretation. This point of inflection commonly referred to as the 'elbow' is a widely accepted threshold in factor analysis, indicating that subsequent components largely reflect random noise rather than meaningful structure.

The plot reinforces the statistical decision to retain the first seven components as they explain the majority of the variance and represent meaningful skill clusters among ISQAs.

Interpretation of Underlying of Perceived Skill Domains

Table 3: *Rotated Component Matrix*

	Component						
CODE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CM4	.941						
CA4	.874						
CA5	.767						
CM3	.668						
CM5							
CA2		.847					
CA1		.788					
CA3		.779					
CE3			.799				
CP3			.797				
CM2							
CM1				.818			
CP1				.647			
CE4					.812		
CP5					.690		
CE1						.769	
CP4						.697	
CE5							
CP2							.852
CE2							

Source: Field Data, 2025

Assessment Skills

Assessment skills (Component 2, 13.016% variance) were led by CA4 using data to improve school performance (0.874), the strongest and most consistent practice. This was supported by CA2 understanding QA principles (0.847), CA1 reviewing lesson notes for outcomes alignment (0.788), CA3 identifying strengths and weaknesses in QA processes (0.779), and CA5 assessing teaching strategies across subjects (0.767). Together, these results show ISQAs' strong ability to blend data use, theoretical knowledge, and practical evaluation in enhancing school performance.

Monitoring Skills

Monitoring skills (Component 1, 21.400% variance) were dominated by CM4 observing classroom practices and identifying improvement areas (0.941), the highest loading overall. Other key practices included CM1 reviewing lesson notes for clarity (0.818), CM3 tracking QA initiatives over time (0.668), CM5 identifying improvement areas (0.635), and CM2 analysing performance trends (0.509). These findings highlight monitoring as the most emphasized ISQA function, especially classroom observation and follow-up for continuous school improvement.

Planning Skills

Planning skills (Component 5, 8.424% variance) showed strongest emphasis on CP2 integrating stakeholder feedback (0.852), followed by CP3 prioritizing improvement areas (0.797). Moderate loadings were recorded for CP4 adapting QA plans to context (0.697), CP5 aligning QA with school strategies (0.690), and CP1 setting measurable QA goals (0.647). This indicates that ISQAs emphasize participatory and context-sensitive planning while ensuring QA efforts are strategically aligned with school development.

Evaluation Skills

Evaluation skills (Component 6, 8.010% variance) were led by CE4 identifying teaching improvements (0.812), CE3 conducting teaching and learning audits (0.799), and CE1 analysing evaluation data and giving recommendations (0.769). Lesser emphasis was placed on CE2 evaluating alignment with

school goals (0.627) and CE5 evaluating professional development needs (0.505). These results show ISQAs' evaluation work focuses mainly on improving instruction and systematic audits, with moderate attention to strategic alignment and teacher development.

Discussion

The study's findings confirm that ISQAs in Misungwi District are strongest in monitoring and assessment, moderately skilled in planning, and weakest in evaluation. These results support the behaviourist perspective, which emphasizes observation, feedback, and reinforcement of visible behaviours. Monitoring and assessment are consistent with routine supervisory tasks, explaining why ISQAs perform strongly in these domains. Similar results were reported by Lee and Kim (2019) in South Korea, where ISQAs excelled in monitoring and assessment but faced limitations in technology use. In Nigeria, Akinpelu and Ogunyemi (2020) also found ISQAs competent in technical assessment but weak in communication and leadership, echoing Misungwi's planning challenges.

The moderate strength of planning in this study reflects findings by Malima (2022) and Temu (2023), who observed that ISQAs often prioritised tasks but failed to establish measurable goals. The weakness of evaluation mirrors evidence from South Africa (Mthiyane, 2018) and Togo (Kokou, 2021), where ISQAs conducted audits but struggled to link evaluation findings with teacher development. In Ghana, Boachie and Owusu (2021) reported that weak frameworks undermined evaluation, while in Tanzania, Mkumbo and Binaisa (2021) highlighted similar difficulties in curriculum assessment and feedback provision. Studies by Ng'hoboko and Mrema (2024), Fungilwa (2021), Lyimo (2023), Mgonja (2021), Kilave (2022), Ntobesya (2023), and Hasanah et al. (2025) all support the conclusion that evaluation in African contexts is often treated as a compliance mechanism rather than a developmental tool.

Taken together, these findings show that the Misungwi case reflects broader regional and global patterns: ISQAs are effective in monitoring and assessment but less capable of strategic planning and evaluation. This highlights the need to reorient ISQA practices from routine compliance towards developmental and transformative approaches that directly support teacher professional growth and school improvement.

Conclusion

The study concludes that ISQAs in Misungwi District possess strong monitoring and assessment skills but are weaker in planning and evaluation. While they are effective in classroom observation, lesson note review, and performance assessment, their limited ability to set measurable goals and link evaluation findings with professional development undermines the developmental potential of ISQA. Without strengthening these weaker domains, ISQA risks remaining a compliance exercise rather than a mechanism for sustainable school improvement.

Recommendations

To strengthen ISQA practices in Misungwi District and beyond, it is recommended that targeted professional development programs be introduced to enhance ISQAs' planning and evaluation skills. Training should focus on data-driven decision-making, strategic goal-setting, and integration of evaluation results into teacher development programs. By equipping ISQAs with these competencies, schools will be better able to transform evaluation from a compliance tool into a developmental process.

In addition, participatory planning should be promoted to ensure that teachers, students, and parents actively contribute to school improvement initiatives. This inclusivity would enhance ownership of ISQA outcomes and ensure that plans are context-sensitive and responsive to the needs of stakeholders. Furthermore, institutional support in the form of clear frameworks, digital tools, and standardized guidelines is essential for enabling ISQAs to perform consistently across schools.

Finally, a cultural shift is required to embed ISQA within schools as a continuous and supportive practice rather than an external inspection. Routine observation, reflective meetings, and collaborative evaluation should become integral to school culture. Future research should examine the long-term impact of strengthened ISQA practices on student outcomes and explore the role of digital innovations in transforming quality assurance in Tanzanian schools.

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