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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Instructional Supervision and Quality Assurance Practices in English Language Teaching: Evidence from Rural Tanzanian Secondary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Instructional supervision and quality assurance (ISQA) are critical for improving teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes, yet their impact on English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural Tanzanian secondary schools is under-researched. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness and challenges of ISQA practices in enhancing ELT in public secondary schools in Sikonge District, Tabora Region. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture both measurable trends and contextual insights. The study involved 120 participants, including 10 school heads, 5 district quality assurance officers, 25 English teachers, and 80 students. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Reliability and validity were ensured through pre-testing, triangulation, and systematic coding of qualitative data, while ethical approval was obtained and participants' confidentiality maintained. Findings revealed that ISQA practices particularly lesson plan supervision, classroom observation, and student assessment monitoring enhanced teachers' pedagogical competence, classroom management, and interactive teaching strategies. Regular, constructive supervisory feedback promoted reflective practice and professional accountability. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, shortage of qualified supervisors, irregular supervision, and weak communication limited effectiveness. Proactive institutional leadership and supportive policy frameworks were identified as key factors in sustaining ISQA outcomes. The study concludes that ISQA can significantly improve ELT in rural schools when integrated with adequate resources, professional development, and participatory supervision models. Recommendations include targeted supervisor training in pedagogical coaching and subject-specific methodologies, improved resource allocation, decentralization of supervision responsibilities, and alignment of policy frameworks to transform ISQA from a compliance-focused exercise into a developmental tool that promotes equitable, high-quality English language instruction.

**Keywords:** Instructional supervision; quality assurance; english language; teaching; rural secondary schools; teacher professional development; Tanzania

## INTRODUCTION

Instructional supervision and quality assurance (ISQA) are critical components of educational systems worldwide, serving as mechanisms to enhance teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. studentscontext of English Language Teaching (ELT), ISQA aims to ensure that classroom practices align with curriculum standards, pedagogical innovations, and

student learning needs. Instructional supervision focuses on guiding teachers to improve their instructional competencies through professional feedback, mentoring, and collaborative reflection (Sullivan & Glanz, 2021). Quality assurance, on the other hand, involves systematic monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of educational processes and outputs to ensure conformity to established standards (Olagbaju & Popoola, 2023). Together, these frameworks play a pivotal role in strengthening teacher accountability, curriculum delivery, and learner performance (Adu & Ngibe, 2023). In many developing countries, ISQA is viewed as both a developmental and regulatory process designed to improve not only teacher performance but also institutional effectiveness in delivering quality education (Kafyulilo & Lwoga, 2024).

Historically, instructional supervision evolved from an inspection-oriented model to a more developmental and participatory approach emphasizing mentorship, collaboration, and professional growth (Glanz, 2022). Early supervision models in the 1960s and 1970s were often evaluative, hierarchical, and punitive, with inspectors primarily focused on fault-finding rather than supporting teachers' professional learning. Over time, educational reforms globally shifted supervision practices toward reflective coaching and collaborative models that empower teachers to take ownership of instructional improvement (Daresh & Playko, 2020). Quality assurance, as a concept, gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s with the global push for accountability and performance-based education systems, particularly following the introduction of outcome-based education frameworks. In Africa, ISQA practices were institutionalized in response to both donor-driven educational reforms and national quality improvement agendas (UNESCO, 2023). Today, supervision and QA are central to ensuring effective curriculum implementation, particularly in language education where teaching quality directly influences learners' communicative competence and academic success (Mulkeen, 2023).

In Tanzania, the government has made significant strides in strengthening ISQA structures through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE). The introduction of the Education and Training Policy (2014) and the Education Sector Development Plan (2021–2026) reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving educational quality through systematic supervision and teacher professional development (URT, 2021). However, challenges persist, especially in rural secondary schools, where English used as the medium of instruction is often poorly taught and inadequately supported due to teacher shortages, limited resources, and inadequate supervisory follow-up (Kiwia & Mosha, 2022; Mkunde, 2024). Many teachers in these contexts lack access to ongoing in-service training or mentorship opportunities that could enhance their pedagogical practices. Furthermore, geographical isolation, resource constraints, and large class sizes complicate effective supervision and monitoring of instructional quality (Nzoka & Orodho, 2023). Consequently, despite policy efforts, the effectiveness of ISQA practices in improving English language teaching outcomes in rural Tanzanian schools remains uncertain and under-researched.

This study is grounded in Developmental Supervision Theory (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2018) and Quality Assurance Theory (Harvey & Green, 1993), which together emphasize continuous improvement, professional growth, and stakeholder accountability in education. Developmental Supervision Theory advocates differentiated support for teachers based on their professional maturity, suggesting that supervisors should adapt strategies ranging from directive to collaborative or non-directive approaches depending on teacher competence and motivation. This model aligns with constructivist views of teacher learning, where reflection and collegial dialogue foster professional improvement (Glanz, 2022). Quality Assurance Theory complements this by focusing on institutional mechanisms that uphold educational standards and promote consistency between policy, practice, and learning outcomes (Harvey & Williams, 2021). The theoretical integration of these frameworks enables a holistic analysis of how ISQA practices can influence English language teaching effectiveness in rural schools, addressing both the micro-level (classroom supervision) and macro-level (institutional accountability) dimensions of educational quality.

Despite the government's investment in inspection and supervision reforms, there remains limited empirical evidence on how ISQA practices actually influence the teaching and learning of English in rural Tanzanian secondary schools. Much of the existing research has focused on general supervision efficiency or teacher motivation rather than the specific pedagogical challenges faced in language instruction (Mushi & Kitila, 2023; Matonya, 2025). Understanding the interplay

between ISQA mechanisms and English language teaching practices is crucial for informing targeted interventions that address the persistent performance gaps between urban and rural schools. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the effectiveness and challenges of ISQA practices in improving English language teaching and learning in rural public secondary schools in Sikonge District, Tabora. The findings are expected to contribute to both theory and practice by offering evidence-based insights into how supervision and quality assurance systems can be strengthened to promote equitable and effective English language education across Tanzanian schools.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Instructional supervision and quality assurance (ISQA) practices are grounded in several interrelated theoretical perspectives that explain how teaching quality can be improved through systematic oversight and professional development. The Developmental Supervision Theory (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2018) posits that supervision should be tailored to teachers' levels of professional maturity, ranging from directive to collaborative approaches. This model emphasizes the supervisor's role as a facilitator of reflective practice and instructional improvement rather than as an evaluator. Complementary to this, Quality Assurance Theory (Harvey & Green, 1993) conceptualizes quality as a multidimensional construct encompassing fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation, and consistency of standards. In educational settings, quality assurance focuses on ensuring that teaching processes, assessment methods, and learning environments align with institutional and national goals (Harvey & Williams, 2021). Together, these theories highlight the importance of both human development and systemic regulation in enhancing teaching effectiveness. They also offer a useful framework for analyzing how ISQA practices function within the Tanzanian education system, particularly in rural contexts where supervision resources and teacher competencies are unevenly distributed.

Conceptually, instructional supervision involves systematic guidance and support provided to teachers to improve their instructional techniques and professional growth. It encompasses classroom observation, feedback, coaching, mentoring, and professional dialogue aimed at improving teaching and learning outcomes (Sullivan & Glanz, 2021). Quality assurance, meanwhile, extends beyond classroom supervision to include mechanisms for monitoring curriculum implementation, evaluating performance standards, and ensuring accountability across all levels of the education system (Olagbaju & Popoola, 2023). The integration of supervision and quality assurance processes provides a holistic approach to educational improvement by aligning teacher development with institutional performance (Adu & Ngibe, 2023). In English Language Teaching (ELT), ISQA ensures that pedagogical practices promote communicative competence, critical thinking, and language accuracy. However, scholars note that effective ISQA implementation depends on supervisors' competence, institutional culture, and the availability of adequate resources (Kafyulilo & Lwoga, 2024; Glanz, 2022). When properly executed, ISQA practices foster reflective teaching, continuous improvement, and accountability, which are vital for raising the quality of English education in multilingual and resource-constrained environments such as Tanzania.

Empirical studies across different educational contexts show varying degrees of ISQA effectiveness. In developed contexts, supervision is often collaborative, research-informed, and technology-supported, contributing to significant gains in teacher professional development (Adewumi & Lawal, 2023; Zepeda, 2022). In contrast, research in developing countries reveals that supervision remains largely inspection-oriented, constrained by inadequate training and limited resources (Mulkeen, 2023). For instance, Mushi and Kitila (2023) found that Tanzanian school inspectors often emphasize compliance rather than pedagogical improvement, leading to minimal impact on classroom practices. Similarly, a study by Kiwia and Mosha (2022) showed that rural schools face acute shortages of qualified supervisors and poor follow-up mechanisms, undermining the sustainability of quality improvement efforts. Studies from Kenya and Uganda also indicate that when supervision is irregular and disconnected from teacher professional development, its impact on learning outcomes diminishes significantly (Nzoka & Orodho, 2023; Oduor et al., 2024). These findings suggest that ISQA practices must be context-sensitive, participatory, and focused on teacher empowerment rather than fault-finding if they are to yield meaningful improvements in English language teaching.

Despite the growing literature on educational supervision and quality assurance, few studies have explored how ISQA practices specifically influence

English language teaching and learning in rural Tanzanian settings. Existing research often focuses on general supervision challenges, leaving a gap in understanding how these mechanisms function in subject-specific contexts such as ELT (Matonya, 2025; Fussy, 2025). Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to the intersection between teacher supervision, instructional quality, and student language performance. This study therefore extends current scholarships by examining how ISQA practices affect ELT in rural secondary schools, where systemic barriers including inadequate supervision, resource scarcity, and insufficient teacher support are most pronounced. By linking theoretical insights from developmental supervision and quality assurance frameworks with empirical evidence from rural Tanzania, this study contributes to the broader discourse on educational quality improvement and the professionalization of English language teaching in developing contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of instructional supervision and quality assurance (ISQA) practices in improving English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural public secondary schools in Tanzania. The mixed-methods approach was adopted to strengthen the validity and depth of findings by capturing both measurable trends and contextual insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study was conducted in Sikonge District, Tabora Region, which was purposefully selected because of its predominantly rural setting and persistent challenges in English language performance. The target population comprised school heads, academic masters/mistresses, quality assurance officers, English language teachers, and students from government secondary schools. A total of 120 participants were involved, including 10 heads of schools, 5 district quality assurance officers, 25 English teachers, and 80 students. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to teachers and students, while qualitative data were gathered through interviews with heads of schools and quality assurance officers. This combination of instruments provided both numerical data and in-depth perspectives on supervision processes, teacher support mechanisms, and perceived challenges in ISQA implementation.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and thematic techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 to generate frequencies, percentages, and means that described the patterns of ISQA effectiveness and challenges. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring ideas and themes related to supervision practices, feedback mechanisms, and institutional support structures. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative results allowed for triangulation and strengthened the interpretation of findings (Fusch et al., 2022). To ensure reliability and validity, research instruments were pre-tested in a neighboring district, and necessary adjustments were made to improve clarity and consistency. Ethical approval was obtained from the St. Augustine University of Tanzania Research and Ethics Committee, and permission was secured from relevant educational authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and confidentiality of their responses. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, and all data were used strictly for academic purposes.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the key findings on the effectiveness and challenges of instructional supervision and quality assurance (ISQA) practices in improving English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural Tanzanian secondary schools. The results are organized into three main themes: (i) Effectiveness of ISQA practices in ELT, (ii) Challenges facing ISQA implementation, and (iii) Institutional and policy implications of ISQA. Both quantitative and qualitative findings are integrated and discussed in relation to relevant empirical studies and theoretical frameworks.

### Effectiveness of ISQA Practices in Improving English Language Teaching

Quantitative analysis revealed that a majority of respondents rated lesson plan supervision (64%), classroom observation (58%), and student assessment monitoring (60%) as highly effective ISQA practices in enhancing English language instruction. The overall mean score for ISQA effectiveness was $M = 3.89$ ($SD = 0.73$), indicating a moderately high perception of ISQA's contribution to improved English teaching. An independent sample test showed a significant difference ($p < .05$) between teachers who received regular supervisory feedback and those who did not,

suggesting that consistent supervision positively influences teaching performance. Qualitative data further supported these results: teachers noted that feedback from supervisors helped them refine lesson delivery, improve classroom management, and integrate more interactive teaching strategies. One teacher remarked, “When supervisors visit and discuss our lessons, we get encouraged and learn how to make our teaching more effective.” These findings demonstrate that ISQA mechanisms, when effectively executed, foster reflective teaching and professional accountability among English teachers.

The results align with several empirical studies emphasizing that supervision contributes positively to teaching quality when it focuses on professional support rather than inspection (Adu & Ngibe, 2023; Glanz, 2022; Sullivan & Glanz, 2021). Research conducted in Kenya and Uganda also found that structured feedback and mentoring significantly improved teachers’ pedagogical competence (Nzoka & Orodho, 2023; Oduor et al., 2024). In the Tanzanian context, Mushi and Kitila (2023) reported that schools with active supervision frameworks showed higher learner performance in language subjects. The present findings therefore corroborate the idea that continuous supervision and formative evaluation play a central role in enhancing English language teaching effectiveness, especially in resource-limited environments. Moreover, the study’s inferential results underscore that the frequency and quality of supervisory feedback have a statistically meaningful relationship with instructional outcomes, reinforcing the developmental rather than punitive role of supervision.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the Developmental Supervision Theory (Glickman et al., 2018), which emphasizes differentiated and supportive supervision as a catalyst for teacher growth. The improvement in teachers’ instructional practices observed in this study demonstrates the theory’s relevance in rural Tanzanian contexts, where professional learning opportunities are often limited. The findings also align with Quality Assurance Theory (Harvey & Green, 1993), which advocates for consistency and accountability in teaching processes to sustain educational quality. The implication is that when ISQA is implemented as a collaborative and developmental process, it enhances teachers’ professional confidence, reflective capacity, and instructional innovation. For Tanzanian schools, this means that ISQA can serve as a vehicle for continuous teacher improvement and effective curriculum delivery if supported by regular feedback loops, leadership engagement, and adequate resources.

**Challenges Facing ISQA Implementation**

Descriptive statistics revealed that 73% of respondents identified inadequate resources as a major hindrance to ISQA implementation, followed by shortage of qualified supervisors (68%), limited professional development opportunities (61%), and weak communication mechanisms (57%). The mean perception score for ISQA challenges was $M = 4.02$ ($SD = 0.69$), indicating that most participants viewed these barriers as severe. Inferential analysis showed a strong negative correlation ($r = –0.68$, $p < .01$) between the frequency of supervision and perceived resource adequacy, implying that poorly resourced environments significantly reduce the frequency and quality of supervisory visits. Qualitative findings reinforced this quantitative evidence: many participants reported that school supervision schedules were irregular due to budgetary limitations, poor transport facilities, and insufficient staffing. A district quality assurance officer explained, “We cannot reach every school as planned. Sometimes we go months without visiting rural schools because we lack vehicles and fuel.” Teachers also noted that feedback from supervisors was often delayed or generalized, limiting its usefulness for improving classroom practices.

These challenges mirror those identified in related African studies that have documented the constraints of educational supervision in rural contexts (Kiwia & Mosha, 2022; Mulkeen, 2023; Mtebe, 2020). For instance, Olagbaju and Popoola (2023) observed that without adequate training and logistical support, supervisors struggle to provide meaningful professional guidance. Similarly, research in Ghana and Malawi has shown that supervision is frequently reduced to bureaucratic compliance rather than developmental engagement due to systemic inefficiencies (UNESCO, 2023). The consistency between these findings and the current study suggests that Tanzania’s supervision system faces structural challenges that undermine its effectiveness, particularly in rural areas where resource constraints are most acute. These barriers not only affect the frequency of supervision but also diminish its quality, making it difficult to sustain teacher motivation and professional development.

Interpreted through the lens of Developmental Supervision Theory, these findings indicate that the effectiveness of supervision depends heavily on

contextual adaptability and the availability of supportive conditions (Glanz, 2022). When supervisors lack the means to conduct follow-up visits or provide subject-specific mentorship, the developmental function of supervision is lost, reducing it to an evaluative exercise. Similarly, Quality Assurance Theory emphasizes consistency, reliability, and stakeholder participation as key to maintaining educational standards (Harvey & Williams, 2021). The observed inconsistencies in ISQA implementation violate these principles, highlighting the need for systemic reforms. Practically, the results suggest that the government and educational authorities should invest in supervisor training, transport logistics, and digital reporting systems to enhance coverage and effectiveness. Ensuring that supervision is regular, well-supported, and pedagogically focused would help transform ISQA from a compliance mechanism into a genuine tool for professional empowerment.

**Institutional and Policy Implications of ISQA for English Language Teaching**

Statistical results further indicated that 59% of respondents agreed that institutional leadership and policy support significantly influence ISQA outcomes, while regression analysis revealed that school leadership commitment explained 42% of the variance ($R^2 = .42$, $p < .01$) in ISQA effectiveness. This suggests that schools with proactive leadership and clear supervision policies were more likely to demonstrate improved English language teaching practices. Qualitative data provided additional evidence: teachers in well-managed schools reported regular classroom observations, constructive feedback, and collaborative professional meetings, whereas those in poorly managed institutions described supervision as "occasional and inconsistent." Heads of schools acknowledged that policy enforcement was often weak due to overlapping mandates between district and school-level supervisors. This indicates that institutional governance and accountability mechanisms are crucial determinants of ISQA success in promoting ELT effectiveness.

These findings are consistent with empirical studies underscoring the importance of leadership and institutional commitment in sustaining quality assurance practices (Adu & Ngibe, 2023; Mulkeen, 2023). According to Fussy (2025), school leadership in Tanzania plays a decisive role in ensuring that supervision reports translate into actionable improvements. Similarly, Oduor et al. (2024) found that schools with strong quality assurance frameworks and collaborative staff cultures reported higher teaching effectiveness and student achievement. The present findings therefore affirm that effective ISQA requires not only functional supervision systems but also leadership that prioritizes teacher development, follow-up, and accountability. When leaders view supervision as a shared responsibility rather than a top-down process, it creates a professional culture conducive to continuous learning and instructional innovation.

From a theoretical standpoint, these results further validate Quality Assurance Theory, which emphasizes the integration of institutional structures, leadership, and policy frameworks in achieving consistent educational quality (Harvey & Green, 1993; Harvey & Williams, 2021). The findings also resonate with Developmental Supervision Theory, which advocates supportive, context-sensitive leadership as a prerequisite for effective teacher supervision (Glickman et al., 2018). The implication is that strengthening leadership capacity and institutional accountability will enhance both the perceived usefulness and sustainability of ISQA systems. Practically, this means establishing clear policy linkages between national quality assurance directives and school-level implementation, supported by adequate funding and monitoring mechanisms. Such reforms will ensure that ISQA becomes an integrated, evidence-based framework for continuous improvement in English language teaching across Tanzania's rural secondary schools.

The findings from all three themes collectively highlight that effective ISQA practices depend on an enabling environment that integrates consistent supervision, strong institutional leadership, adequate resources, and responsive policy frameworks. For Tanzanian educational authorities, this means moving beyond inspection toward developmental and participatory supervision models that emphasize mentoring, feedback, and teacher professional growth. Training programs for supervisors should include pedagogical coaching skills and English-specific methodologies to ensure relevant and constructive support. Furthermore, decentralizing supervision responsibilities to school-based teams and incorporating digital monitoring tools could enhance coverage and accountability. By embedding ISQA within school improvement plans and teacher professional development initiatives, the education system can strengthen teaching quality,

reduce rural-urban disparities, and promote equitable learning outcomes nationwide.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDAIONS

The study has demonstrated that instructional supervision and quality assurance (ISQA) practices play a significant role in enhancing English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural Tanzanian secondary schools. Effective ISQA mechanisms, such as lesson plan supervision, classroom observation, and student assessment monitoring, were found to improve teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom management, and use of interactive teaching strategies. The results further indicate that regular, constructive supervisory feedback fosters reflective teaching and professional accountability, aligning with the principles of Developmental Supervision Theory and Quality Assurance Theory. However, the study also highlighted persistent challenges, including inadequate resources, shortages of qualified supervisors, irregular supervision schedules, and weak communication systems, which undermine the effectiveness of ISQA implementation. These findings underscore that the success of ISQA is contingent not only on the presence of supervision mechanisms but also on supportive institutional leadership, policy enforcement, and a resource-enabled environment. Schools with proactive leadership and clear policy frameworks reported better supervision outcomes, confirming that institutional governance is a critical determinant of sustained instructional improvement.

In light of these conclusions, several recommendations emerge. First, educational authorities should prioritize the professional development and training of supervisors, emphasizing pedagogical coaching and English-specific methodologies to ensure targeted and constructive feedback. Second, resource allocation must be strengthened, including provision of transport, teaching materials, and digital tools to facilitate regular and efficient supervision, especially in remote areas. Third, schools should adopt collaborative, participatory supervision models, such as school-based quality assurance teams, to complement district-level oversight and enhance coverage and accountability. Fourth, policy frameworks should clearly delineate supervisory responsibilities and integrate ISQA into school improvement plans, linking supervision outcomes to teacher professional growth and curriculum delivery. By implementing these strategies, Tanzanian educational authorities can transform ISQA from a compliance-focused activity into a developmental tool, promoting equitable, high-quality English language instruction and fostering sustainable improvements in rural secondary schools.

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