INFLUENCE OF PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION APPROACHES ON THE PRACTICE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN KENYA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract
This study sought to establish whether quality assurance as currently practiced in learning institutions in Kenya is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. The study had two objectives a) to establish the extent to which principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation align to the practice of quality assurance, and b) to establish the steps for implementing a participatory quality assurance process. The study adopted a survey research design and a mixed mode approach to data analysis. It was established that indeed as practiced, quality assurance in schools was a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation and recommends that Quality Assurance and Standards Officers need to undergo specialized training in participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Quality, Participation, monitoring and evaluation, Quality assurance

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Participatory approaches to evaluation have long been in vogue in the world. Inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation exercise has been noted to increase the potential of increasing the utilization of evaluation results, thereby increasing the quality of a given program. According to King (2005), participatory evaluation is an overarching term for any evaluation approach that involves program staff or participants actively in decision making and other activities related to the planning and implementation of evaluation studies. Cousins and Earl (1999) have defined participatory evaluation as applied social research that involves a partnership between a trained and practice based decision makers, organization membership with program responsibility, or people with a vital interest in the program. The people with an
interest in a program are referred to as stakeholders. These are people who have a stake or a vested interest or those who have a substantial ego, credibility, power, futures or other capital invested in the program (Scriven 1991; Greene 2005). This paper finds this definition more encompassing and more reflective of the school situation. A school has many stakeholders including others who have less or no knowledge of school activities.

Quality assurance in learning institutions has become not only an institutional issue but also a global one. Schools throughout the world today are focusing special attention on designing and implementing new quality assurance mechanisms and systems in order to ensure that students receive high quality and relevant education. Quality assurance in education can be defined as a systematic management and assessment procedures adopted by education institutions and systems in order to monitor performance against objectives, and to ensure achievements of quality outputs and quality improvements (Harman, 2000). According to Manakin (2010), quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. Essentially, quality assurance systems aim to provide appropriate evidence to substantiate claims made about quality and so to enable key stakeholders to have confidence about the management of quality and the level of outcome achieved. Quality is at the heart of education and what takes place in classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important to the future well being of young people and adults (Manakin, 2010). Quality assurance principles are necessary to ensure accountability and the improvement of education. Quality assurance therefore, is an integral part of the internal management of education and training institutions. There is greater recognition that monitoring and evaluation and development and other community based initiatives should be participatory (Aubel, 2004). The growing interest in participatory monitoring and evaluation parallels concepts such as empowerment, democratization, partnership and sustainability which in one way or the other attempts to give a voice to the poor and disenfranchised whose voices have not been adequately heard (UNDP, 1997).

According to RoK (2000), the objectives of quality assurance are among others; to monitor the performance of teachers and educational institutions in accordance with All Round Performance indicators, have regular reporting to the ministry of education on the general quality of education in Kenya at national, provincial, district and school levels and encourage
a collaborative and corporate approach to educational institutional management among the various stakeholders. This implies that an effective quality assurance practice must involve all the stakeholders. Experience has shown that participation improves the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of development actions (UNDP, 1997). Participation can be used as a means or as an end or both. If stakeholders are more involved in the design, implementation, management and evaluation of quality assurance, they will be empowered and there is greater chance of implementation of recommendations. In fact the whole process of quality assurance in learning institutions revolves around implementation of recommendations made.

Participatory evaluation has emerged as a dynamic educational process through which social groups produce action oriented knowledge about their reality, clarify and articulate their norms and values, and reach consensus about further action (Cousins 1998; Suarez-Herrera 2009). The assertion by Cousins and Suarez-Herrera fits into the quality assurance goals especially to foster national unity. According to RoK (2012), quality assurance and standards officers in the education sector shall facilitate compliance with standards by promoting a collegial and collective approach to quality assurance. Consequently, the practice of quality assurance does exhibit participatory monitoring and evaluation principles.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The overall policy of the government of Kenya is to achieve education for all. The priority is to ensure equitable access and improvement in quality and efficiency at all levels of education. The ultimate goal is to develop an all inclusive and quality education that is accessible and relevant to all Kenyans. This is guided by the understanding that good education can contribute significantly to economic growth, improved employment prospects and income generating opportunities. The government policy also entails allowing a broad based participation in the provision of education with all stakeholders taking responsibility for planning and implementation. In tandem with this policy is the decentralization of decision making and resource management at lower level structures of the ministry. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) provides for two levels of government: the central government and 47 county governments which are distinct yet interdependent. Education policies are formulated by the National Education Board and executed by the County Education Boards.

Developing standards in education and maintaining the desired quality remains a major challenge across education systems throughout the world. Quality in education is perceived as the degree to which education can be said to be of high standard, satisfies basic learning
needs, and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living (UNESCO, 2000). During the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000, participants committed themselves to improving the quality of all aspects of education. The delegates concluded that quality is at the heart of education and is one of the key goals in achievement of Education for All (EFA).

The role and character of standards and quality assurance varies from country to country. The purpose of quality assurance should be to identify strengths and weaknesses at schools and wider institutional level so that a school may maintain effective school management systems, improve the quality of education provided and raise the educational standards achieved by pupils (RoK, 2012). Despite these glaring similarities, quality assurance managers in the education sector have not fully integrated participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches to the practice of quality assurance. This paper therefore, basically argues that quality assurance as practiced in the education sector is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation and seeks to establish the extent of its influence on the practice of quality assurance in secondary schools in Kenya.

1.2 Research objectives

The general objective of this paper is to establish whether as currently practiced, quality assurance in schools is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. However, to achieve this objective, the following specific objectives will be pursued:

a) To establish the extent to which principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation align to the practice of quality assurance.

b) To establish the steps for implementing a participatory quality assurance process.

1.3 Research questions

The main question to be answered by this paper is: As practiced in secondary schools, is quality assurance a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation? However, the following questions will be answered in an attempt to answer the main question.

a) Do the guiding principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation align to the practice of quality assurance?

b) What are the steps for implementing a participatory quality assurance process?
2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICE

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) is guided by the following principles which are aligned to quality assurance process principles. Although PM&E principles have been institutionalized and embraced by practitioners, those of quality assurance are not institutionalized by practitioners. This may be attributed to the people employed to undertake quality assurance in learning institutions in Kenya. There are no professionally trained quality assurance officers in the education sector. Those engaged to undertake quality assurance in learning institutions are teachers without specialized training in quality issues. Apart from the mandatory induction course attended by newly recruited officers, everything else depends on experience. This contrasts to the practice of monitoring and evaluation which is practiced by professionally trained evaluators. These principles are given here below and discussed at length.

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<th>Participatory monitoring and evaluation</th>
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2.1 Principle of participation

Participatory approaches acknowledge that there are several stakeholders who are or ought to participate in the evaluation (Crishna 2006; Estrella 1998; Cousins 1998; Jackson 1998). A core feature of participatory evaluation is recognizing who actually participates. Stakeholders become directly or indirectly involved in agreeing what to be achieved. Involvement of various stakeholders in quality assurance process is key to success. Primary stakeholders who are teachers must be fully integrated into the process. The administrators and management must also be involved. The process of quality assurance is concerned with identifying the strengths and weaknesses of an institution. This identification will lead to setting, maintaining and/or improving standards (RoK 2012). The principle of participation in PM&E is equivalent to involvement in quality assurance process.
2.2 Principle of Learning

With an emphasis on practical or action oriented learning, participatory evaluation is an educational experience for participants as well as a means for local capacity building (Estrella et al. 2000). Characterized as a process of individual and collective learning, participatory evaluation enables participants to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, their social reality and their visions and perspectives of development outcomes (Suarez- Herrera 2009). Understanding the various factors that affect the conditions and dynamics of their project, the basis for their successes and failures, and the potential solutions or alternative actions (Estrella et al. 2002), participants develop skills which enable them plan, solve problems, and make decisions. The process of quality assurance also aims at making teachers learn on how to carry out quality assurance in their institutions by developing their own Internal Quality Assurance (IQA). They are considered as first line quality assurance officers.

Participatory evaluation is conceptualized as a learn cycle. Collectively, participants learn from experience, gain the abilities to evaluate their own needs, analyze priorities and objectives and assume action oriented planning (Jackson 1998). Continuous reflection allows stakeholders to assess the impact of the evaluation and the direction of the process as they learn from their own successes and mistakes. Active participation of stakeholders can result in new knowledge or a better understanding of their environment. The practice of quality assurance is meant to identify strengths and weaknesses inherent in an institution with a view to solving them. Participation by education stakeholders in the process enables them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and possible ways of solving them.

2.3 The Principle of Negotiation

Participatory evaluation and monitoring is increasingly perceived as a social process for negotiating between people’s needs, expectations and world views (Estrella et al. 2000). Stakeholders in the education process will have different claims, issues and concerns based upon their social values which are influenced by their realities. The negotiation process allows participants to gain a better understanding of their own and others interest, perceptions and roles in the evaluation. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders in the evaluation and monitoring process is perceived by practitioners as contributing towards the building of trust and changing of perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes among stakeholders to improve the outcome for all (Campilan 2000; Jackson 1998).

The process of quality assurance calls for negotiation. According to RoK (2000), there are various types of assessment to assure quality in learning institutions. These types require that
the quality assurance officers negotiate among themselves under the guidance of the lead QASO as well as negotiate with other people who have a stake in education. The purpose of negotiation is to create a sense of ownership and ensure implementation of recommendations. However, stakeholders are never fully involved in the quality assurance process. Through an educational, learning process, stakeholders produce knowledge about their reality, clarify and articulate their norms and values, and reach consensus about further action (Estrella et al. 2000; Cousins 1998; Suarez Herrera 2009).

2.4 The Principle of Flexibility

Many practitioners concur that there is no prescribed blue print to participatory approaches. Flexibility is essential since factors e.g. environment, number and skills of stakeholders change over time. Participatory evaluations are context specific (socio-cultural, economic, political etc) rooted in the concerns, interests and problems of beneficiaries; local conditions influence and determine the evaluations purpose and direction (UNDP 1997). As practiced in PM&E, this principle has not been fully embraced in quality assurance. According to RoK (2012), quality assurance officers must follow some given format for assessment and reporting irrespective of the prevailing conditions. Consequently, quality assurance process has adopted an inflexible blue print approach.

From the above analysis of principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance practice, it could be concluded that irrespective of the terminologies used in each case, they basically mean the same thing. The challenge that the practice of quality assurance in secondary schools in Kenya faces is institutionalization of the practice. As noted by Mobegi et. al ( 2010), institutionalization of the practice of quality assurance has been a challenge due to lack of proper training of quality assurance officers.

3. STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING A PARTICIPATORY QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

Participatory evaluation tries to explicitly address several issues e.g. stakeholder participation, evaluation, utilization, evaluator role and the importance of values within an evaluation. There are no prescribed set of approaches to carrying out participatory evaluation. The following are key steps in the evaluation process:
3.1 Create a plan

An evaluation plan must be prepared. If key stakeholders request the evaluation, the evaluator needs to encourage the stakeholders to think about what they want to learn from the evaluation. In conducting quality assurance in learning institutions, a rationale should be given for choosing the particular institution to be assessed. The reasons may range from a request by the stakeholders to the work plan of the quality assurance officer. The reason notwithstanding, a plan must be developed to guide the assessment process.

3.2 Identify who should be involved

The relations between evaluators and stakeholders must be changed with an emphasis on power sharing. In addition to the role of technical expert, an evaluator may assume the role of an educator, learner, facilitator, coordinator, arbitrator or negotiator. In quality assurance process, the lead QASO needs to identify who should be involved depending on type of assessment (RoK 2000) and inform them accordingly.

3.3 Collaborate On Creating an Evaluation Plan

Using a workshop format, the terms of reference must be developed to make the decision making process transparent, establish who will do what, address issues of confidentiality and control of data, and emphasize the significance of team ownership of the process (Burke 1998). From the quality assurance perspective, the lead QASO needs to divide various sections of the assessment process to various officers. Collaborative report writing is always encouraged. This ensures that the report produced is owned by everybody.

3.4 Gather information and conduct evaluation

Participatory evaluation adapts data collection strategies that fit the skills and resources of involved participants. The external evaluator will need to use his technical expertise to determine who will be involved in collecting data and what methods will be used. In Quality assurance, all those involved in assuring quality will collect data and carry out institutional assessment. According to the RoK (2000), the data collection methods are abbreviated as ODD (observation, discussion and documentation). The term documentation in this context is misplaced. The right term would be document review/analysis.

3.5 Synthesize and analyze data, build consensus

Evaluators present the collected data back to participants for verification and collective analysis. Data are verified in workshop settings, reports from group meetings and workshops are transcribed and triangulated. In quality assurance process, quality assurance officers must brief the teachers on their findings before the production of the official report. Teachers also
have an opportunity to give their input as well as other stakeholders who may happen to be in school on the day of assessment.

4.0 STUDY MODEL

This paper adopted the context, input, process and product (CIPP) monitoring and evaluation model. CIPP model is a management Oriented Approach that is concerned with providing information that could help project managers to make crucial decisions about the project. The rationale of this approach is an essential component of good decision making. This model is based upon the view that the most important purpose of evaluation is to improve the function of a program. The model is intended to help program leadership and personnel to systematically collect information about their program and to use that information as a comprehensive framework for guiding evaluations of programs, projects, personnel, products, institutions, and systems. The model is a holistic approach that looks at evaluation in terms of context, inputs, process and product.

The CIPP model is intended to serve its audience - the decision-makers - so that the concerns, the information needs, and the criteria for effectiveness of the decision maker guide the direction of the study. The model has been useful in guiding educators in programme planning, operation and review as well as programme improvement (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). By highlighting different levels of decisions and decision-makers, the CIPP model clarifies who will use the evaluation result, how will they use them, and what aspect(s) of the system they are making decisions about (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). In the practice of Quality Assurance in schools in Kenya, this model fits in that the whole process looks at various stakeholders in the education sector and what their views are about the institution under review. These stakeholders include learners, teachers, parents and even the quality assurance officers conducting the assessment.

The CIPP model was designed by Daniel Stufflebeam. It recognizes the need for evaluation to be more holistic in its approach and has been used for accountability ‘purposes since it provides a record-keeping framework that facilitates public review of educational needs, objectives, plans, activities, and outcomes’. Stufflebeam suggested that 'there were different aspects of programme planning, design and implementation to which evaluators needed to be sensitive, and that there were different types of evaluation necessary to these different aspects'
In quality assurance as well, there are various types of assessments as indicated in RoK (2000). However, the underlying principle in all those assessments is participation.

The purpose of this model is to provide relevant information to decision makers for judging decision alternatives. The proponent of this model argues that evaluation should assume a cyclical approach whereby feedback is continuously provided to all decision makers. It highlights different levels of decision makers and how, where and in what aspects of the project results will be used for decision making. The model assumes that the decision maker is an audience to whom management oriented evaluation is directed (Worthen, et al,). The model has various types of evaluation that must be accomplished. This model expresses the need to evaluate goals, look at inputs, examine implementation and delivery of services, as well as measure intended and unintended outcomes of the program. It also emphasized the need to make judgments about the merit and worth of the object being evaluated. The CIPP achieves this through its view that 'the most important purpose of evaluation is not to prove but to improve' (Stufflebeam, 1983).

### 4.1 Context Evaluation

Context evaluation seeks to identify the strengths, weaknesses, needs, and opportunities of some project and to offer direction for improvement. It examines whether existing goals correspond to the needs of the person being served. The aim of this evaluation is to lead a decision about whether to introduce change into a programme (Stufflebeam 1983). Context evaluation is usually concluded when a specific set of objectives is identified for which an instructional programme can be developed (Popham 1975). Context evaluation is primarily descriptive and comparative: describing the present state of an object and comparing the present, probable, and possible outcomes (Ibid.1975). This type of evaluation is the most basic under CIPP model. Its purpose is to provide a rationale for determining of object or specifically defines the relevant environment.

Context evaluation is part and parcel of the work to be undertaken, or have been undertaken, as part of needs assessment and should inform planning decisions. It therefore can be used to guide the choice of program objectives and help prioritize them. In terms of quality assurance, the process starts by identifying the historical development of the institution being assessed.
4.2 Input Evaluation

The purpose of input evaluation is to provide information for determining how to utilize resources to meet project goals. This is accomplished by identifying and assessing relevant capabilities of the responsible agency, strategies for achieving project goals, and designs for implementing a selected strategy. The end product of input evaluation is an analysis of one or more procedural designs in terms of cost benefit. Specifically, alternative designs are assessed concerning staffing, time, budget requirements, potential procedural barriers, the consequences for not overcoming these barriers and the possibilities and the cost of overcoming them, relevance of design to the project objectives and overall potential of the design to meeting the objectives. Essentially, the input evaluation provides information to decide if outside assistance is required to meet the objectives.

An input evaluation is designed to assess the extent to which program strategies, procedures and activities support the goals and objectives identified in the needs assessment and context evaluation. An input evaluation is therefore, an assessment of program action plan. Such an evaluation will help prescribe the specific activities and strategies by which you plan to bring about change. The overall purpose of an input evaluation is to help consider alternative strategies and procedures and to ensure that one has chosen the best approach in terms of assessed needs, goals and objectives identified.

As part of an input evaluation, it is important to recognize that in any improvement initiative, stakeholders, program administrators and participants may have different ideas about program goals and desired outcomes. It is important, therefore, to ensure that individuals are able to articulate their views about what the short-term and long-term goals of the program should be and how those goals could be achieved and reaching agreement over program activities, goals and outcomes through collaborative discussion.

Input evaluation provides information concerning how to use resources to achieve objectives (Popham 1975). It needs to identify and assess present and possible relevant approaches, searching the environment for barriers and potential available resources. Its aim is to help the clients to consider alternatives in terms of their needs and the environmental factors and to select and design an appropriate procedure (Stufflebeam 1983). In quality assurance, the available resources are analyzed in terms of their contribution to quality of education provided.
4.3 Process Evaluation

Process evaluation is necessary to provide periodic feedback to persons responsible for implementing plans and procedures. Process evaluation has three main objectives which are: to detect or predict defects in the procedural designs or its implementation during the implementation stage, to provide information for project design and to maintain record of the procedures as it occurs.

There are three strategies that should be followed during process evaluation. The first is to identify and monitor continuously the potential source of failure in a project. This includes, but not limited to, interpersonal relationships among staff, communication channels, logistics, understanding and agreement within the intent of the project by persons involved in and affected by it, and adequacy of the resources, staff and time schedules. The other involves projecting and serving pre-project decisions to be made by project managers during the implementation of a project. The third process evaluation strategy is to note main features of the project design.

A process evaluation is a critical aspect of program implementation. Process evaluation is the continuous assessment of the implementation of the action plan one has developed; it is an ongoing and systematic monitoring of the program. A process evaluation provides information that can be used to guide the implementation of program strategies, procedures and activities as well as a means to identify process evaluation. Process evaluation becomes necessary once an instructional project is underway. It monitors project operations so that defects in the procedural design are identified or predicted, and guidance for alteration in the plan is provided. This evaluation allows for a full account of the procedure to be recorded. It requires regular feedback meetings between the process evaluator and the project personnel (Stufflebeam et al. 1971; Popham 1975; Stufflebeam 1983).

4.4 Product Evaluation

The purpose of product evaluation is to measure and interpret attainments not only at the end of a project cycle, but as often as necessary during the project. The general method of product evaluation includes devising operational definitions of activities, measuring criteria associated with the objectives of the activity, comparing this measurements with predetermined absolute of relative standards and making national interpretations of the outcomes using the recorded context, input and process information.

The purpose of a product evaluation is to measure, interpret and judge the extent to which improvement efforts have achieved their short-term and long-term goals. A product evaluation
examines both intended and unintended consequences of improvement efforts. Product evaluation is therefore focused on outcomes. This is assessed in examination results in quality assurance.

In a nutshell, CIPP model is not intended to be applied in a linear or lockstep fashion. Rather, the CIPP model provide an organizing framework that underscores the importance of evaluating a program from its inception, through its development and implementation, to its conclusion. When evaluating complex programme that is comprised of a series of secondary goals and various initiatives, the evaluator may move through the CIPP model several times. Each initiative or sub-component of the programme can be subjected to a context, input, process, and product evaluation. The results of these various evaluations can then be combined to provide information about the success of the overall program.

Applications of the CIPP Model typically have included relatively low-cost evaluation team members who spend much time at the program site systematically observing and recording pertinent information. (Their costs are relatively low because they reside in the program’s geographic area and/or are relatively junior members of the evaluation field, such as graduate research assistants) Called Traveling Observers when program sites are dispersed or Resident Observers when program activities are all at one location, these evaluators help design and subsequently work from a specially constructed Traveling Observer’s Handbook containing prescribed evaluation questions, procedures, forms, and reporting formats. Such handbooks are tailored to the needs of the particular evaluation. While the observers focus heavily on context and process evaluations, they may also collect and report information on program plans, costs, impacts, effectiveness, sustainability, and transportability. The use of such specialists enhances the feasibility of regularly and closely studying a program when it would be too costly for the lead evaluators or high-cost experts to be on site for extensive periods of time. For each different type of decision, a corresponding type of evaluation - context, input, process, product, respectively - is proposed.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation are noted to be similar to those of quality assurance in learning institutions. This study therefore, concludes that as currently practiced, quality assurance is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. The selection of participants in both quality assurance and participatory monitoring and evaluation is an encompassing exercise meant to increasing the usability of evaluation results. The study
established that quality assurance as opposed to monitoring and evaluation lacked an institutionalized framework to guide its operations. Quality assurance officers lacked formal training in the practice. Teachers were picked from class to perform the duty of quality assurance without any training in participatory approaches yet they were expected to generate inclusive reports. This affected the usability of assessment reports.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that the practice of quality assurance be institutionalized within an operational framework. This will make the practice more professional just like participatory monitoring and evaluation than it currently is. Likewise, quality assurance and standards officers need to undergo specialized training in the discipline of monitoring and evaluation. The practice of quality assurance should also be grounded on theory rather than the haphazard way in which it is currently undertaken.
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