QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN WEST KENYA UNION CONFERENCE ADVENTIST SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Jackson G. Meremo

Kamagambo Adventist College, P. O. Box 591-40200, Kisii, Kenya
Email address: mejagi@gmail.com

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a standard working policy that guides her wholistic undertakings including education. This study yearned to establish the extent of and the challenges facing the implementation of quality assurance policy for total quality improvement in Adventist secondary schools in West Kenya Union Conference. It used a concurrent mixed research design through purposive, simple random, and convenience techniques to identify 160 respondents from 7 accredited and two non-accredited schools (84 teachers, 9 principals, 4 BoM members and 57 students from form 3 and 4) and 6 education directors from Conferences and the Union. Questionnaires, open-ended, and interview guides were used to collect data. The findings through descriptive statistics as rated by teachers and leaders tended to agree that Quality Assurance policy was implemented and effective; while the same groups observed that challenges affecting its implementation were to a moderate extent. From regression analysis, policy indicated a moderate positive relationship (0.772) between quality assurance policy implementation and effectiveness of quality assurance practices. It was recommended to adopt/establish the quality assurance policy from AAA through sensitization and re-training of working teams at all levels of the Union Conference. Transparent delegation, timely empowerment, equipment and accountability should be applied for contextualized effective implementation and continuous improvement in schools.

Keywords: Quality assurance, policy, implementation, contextualize, Adventist schools

Introduction

The aim of education is to develop the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain of individuals and groups in order to equip them with knowledge and skills necessary to survive and make society progress (Ugwoke & Agwara, 2015). Improving the quality and coverage of education and reorienting its goals are more integrated and *contextualized for lifelong learning* (UNESCO, 2014).

According to Adventist Accreditation Association (2013) quality assurance policy and practices in the Adventist secondary education system when followed have significant improvements in institutional performance. The Adventist educational system, in Mexico has a comprehensive Adventist education model to oversee curriculum design, its implementation and the welfare of the teachers (Leito as cited by Stevens, 2014).

In Europe quality assurance mechanisms and policy are planned to meet today's challenges through fostering a culture that strives to constantly improve the quality of teaching and learning (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). A study done in Ethiopia by Geda (2014) asserts that the QA policies and mechanisms (process) are supposed to be more concerned with standardization of procedures and enhancement of academic practice. The impact of external quality assurance at institutional level shows that there are reasons to believe that there is a gap between intent and reality, at least from the perspective of academic staff (Newton as cited in Geda, 2014).

The juxtaposition of the internal and external quality assurance practices lies on the effective implementation of policies. In Tanzania the enrolment had dropped in some Adventist schools due to economic factors and unclear implementation of Adventist Education philosophy in schools (Arego, Role, & Makewa, 2014). The Republic of Kenya (2013) provided a Policy Framework for education aligning education and training to the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Kenya Vision 2030 and beyond to ensure provision of quality education. The Kenyan education cabinet secretary reiterated thus; "successful education was founded on policy, effective management and execution structure" (KNA, 2016).

Policy provision is vital the quality of teaching and learning input resources that brings quality education. The Adventist education through its AAA quality assurance policy is purported to provide more than the world can give (Wilson, 2013). Administrative as well as managerial challenges of implementation

QAP in Adventist schools have increased than before; hence leading to some evidences of low enrolments, poor performance, inadequate facilities and teaching/ learning resources in some schools. Research findings by Mwenda (2015) revealed that there was inconsistency in the implementation of the Adventist philosophy of education in East Kenya Conference Adventist schools. This could also be the case in the implementation of QAP policy in WKUC - a sister entity.

Principals are key implementers of QAP in schools yet, Adventist Accreditation Association (2013) containing the policy seems not be clearly understood in daily operations and contextualized implementation of QAP in Adventist schools in WKUC. Hence, this study sought to establish the implementation of Adventist schools' quality assurance practices in WKUC in relation to policy and AAA recommendations. Stakeholders' perceptions on the extent of implementation of current practices, its effectiveness, the relationships between effectiveness and implementation and challenges faced, were sought to guide this study.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used a mixed research genre (A "+") whereby both quantitative and qualitative data was concurrently collected from respondents (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Descriptive-correlational analysis was obtained from quantitative questionnaire, semi structured questions and interview guide to generate qualitative data to described and analyzed the extent of policy implementation and the relationship between the implementation and its effectiveness.

Study Area, Population and Sampling Techniques

Table 1

Population, Sampling and Response Rates

Category of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Target Population	Rate of Respondents
Students	57	72	79.2%
Teachers	84	90	93.3%
Principals	09	09	100%
Education Directors	06	06	100%
BoM C/person/member	04	09	44.4%
Total	160	186	88.6%

Nine SDA secondary schools out of twelve (75%) were involved in West Kenya Union Conference, all of whose students, teachers, principals, and BOM members/ chairpersons were purposively, randomly or conveniently sampled; those who were well-placed to describe the extent of policy implementation, its effectiveness and challenges faced in their schools. The six education directors were purposively sampled from each conference and the union. The respondents return rate was 91.43% which was quite high and recommendable for the study.

Research Findings and Discussions

Quality Assurance Policy Implementation

Information was gathered through responses to questionnaire with ten items for policy implementation and its effectiveness respectively. Teachers responded to an open-ended question while students and leaders (principals/education directors/BOM members) were scheduled for an interview for embedment of the study.

Scale of Interpretation for Tables 2 and 3

Weight	Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.50 – 4.00	Agree / High/ Good
3	2.50 – 3.49	Tend to Agree/Average
2	1.50 – 2.49	Tend to Disagree/Below Average

1   1.00 – 1.49   Disagree/ Low/Poor

Table 2 epitomizes responses from both teachers and leaders who tended to agree that there are quality assurance policies in their respective institutions guiding their daily operations with (M=3.03, SD=0.66) and M=3.20, SD=0.47 respectively. The variables with highest means were: All teachers and staff take personal responsibility for their own professional quality and standards in all their activities (M=3.48, SD=0.79), but leaders had (M=3.32, SD=0.67). Teachers observed that the school leadership is committed to total quality improvement (M=3.33, SD=0.94) while leaders had (M=3.68, SD=0.48).

This implies that with the policy in place, the implementation was at stake in their respective areas. This is in agreement with studies done in Nigeria by Chidobi and Eze- Thecla (2016) which revealed that both the external and internal supervisors (principals) do not make use of the Quality Assurance Handbook when performing their supervisory roles. This is because they do not ensure that quality is maintained at the course of performing, they do not undertake quality assurance external evaluation of schools on a regular basis and they do not use the comprehensive quality assurance document which contains information on valuation schedule and all other set standard as stipulated in the book.

Teachers had both high and low means with high standard deviations. For example, the school has a quality assurance office/officer to support and assure the realization of quality in its mission, vision and strategic goals (M=2.55, SD=1.12), leaders M=2.63, SD=1.07). There is an office/officer that continuously monitors the effectiveness of the school quality assurance procedures (M=2.74, SD=1.1), leaders (M=2.95, SD=0.85) the implication is that both teachers and leaders deviate highly in their views on the implementation of QAP policy.

From open ended questions teachers were requested to express their views briefly on the implementation of QAP in their respective schools; their responses out of 84 participants were summarized in three categories: there was good implementation (N=12; 14.3%), needed improvement (N=18; 21.4%), and there was none (N=32; 38.1%), while the rest (N=22; 26.2%) left blank spaces.   Whereas institutions are guided by church policies and principles teachers observed that each institution should establish their criteria against which all engagements covered in its operations should be owned and evaluated to determine performance.

Table 2

Teachers' and Leaders' Responses on Implementation of QA Policies

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The school leadership is committed to total quality improvement.	3.33	.936	3.68	.478
The school has a quality assurance office/officer to support and assure the realization of quality in its mission, vision and strategic goals	2.55	1.12	2.63	1.07
All teachers and staff take personal responsibility for their own professional quality and standards in all their activities.	3.48	.799	3.32	.671
There is an office/officer that continuously monitors the effectiveness of the school quality assurance procedures.	2.74	1.1	2.95	.848
The school ensures that the quality assurance procedures are operating in accordance with good practice, in the best interests of students, and the maintenance of academic standards.	3.02	.931	3.32	.749
The school initiates internal and external review of its programs and activities on a regular cycle	2.95	1.03	3.21	.855
The Adventist Accrediting Association supports the right of our school to pursue its educational mission under the guidance of a governing board elected by its constituency.	3.30	.875	3.37	.895
To maintain quality, feedback is actively sought from students and other major stakeholders.	2.96	.975	3.16	.765
Development and training opportunities are provided to teachers for quality improvement and innovation.	2.94	1.11	2.95	.780
The school provides a supportive environment for the delivery of quality education.	3.02	.994	3.42	.507
Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies	**3.03**	**.657**	**3.20**	**.469**
N	**84**		**19**	

Many teachers echoed that "we have good policies fairly adhered to and promising through effective monitoring; we provide quality education for our students, despite the challenges we are facing." On the other hand, there were those who agreed to have some form of QAP but needed improvement to meet the desired threshold:

    a) The policy was adhered to in some cases but not always.

    b) No policy was put to planned practice it was just not done…or still on paper.

    c) A lot is required; it has been documented but not practiced well. QAP in some schools was not going hand in hand with the policy. The policy was exam oriented

    d) Proper engagement is lacking/ limited; it is verbal through consultations not documented. It is superficially implemented; it was wanting; administration was not keen to implement it! Wanzare (2013) supports that school principals are the chief instructional leaders of their schools whose leadership role is central to establishing and maintaining an effective school. The principal is a pivot in the implementation of quality assurance practices. They

have to ensure the policy implementation and how (the process).

Quality Assurance Practice Effectiveness

Teachers tended to agree though lower than the leaders but with high standard deviations in both that the implementation was effective; (M=2.76, SD=0.87) and (M=3.13, SD=0.59) and coefficients of variation of 31.5% and 18.9% respectively. The highest variable in both was the school gives priority to quality of teaching and learning activities to maintain credibility with (M=3.29, SD=0.93) and (M=3.74, SD=0.45) respectively as shown in Table 3.

The lowest variable but with a high standard deviation was for item seven (M=2.42, SD=1.17) where they tended to disagree that the school provides a conducive working environment to retain workers for improved quality assurance; while the leaders tended to agree with (M=2.89, SD=0.81). This deviation calls for the church, schools' management and leadership to come up with implementation schemes as per policy to curb the situation for continuous improvement.

Lezotte and Snyder (2011) pinpoints seven collates for an effective school are outlined as a guide to assist educators with activities for implementing a continuous school improvement system through application. These are: high expectations for success, strong instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn/time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, safe and orderly environment and positive home-school relations.

Respondents such as students, teachers, principals, education directors and board members had mixed reactions as follows:

S1: Quality assurance practices in our school are effective because there are guidelines (policy) that help us to be disciplined in all matters of academic, spiritual and social in school. For example, if you cheat in exams you are disqualified and sent away.

S3: The school leadership is committed and is trying to "to make the best in us and out of us!" They help students to develop mentally, spiritually and physically for an all-round product. We are nurtured to be well discipline and straight forward.

S13: The school is committed to follow the budget for effective implementation and quality learning. Could be students just trust leaders and teachers and perceive them positively or didn't know exactly what it means!

On the other hand, many teachers wrote that for quality assurance practices to be effective in schools; there was need to have clear guidelines, evaluation tools and involvement in the implementation. The church should embrace all its three arms of the mission, without neglecting education which is crucial and a rich center of evangelism.

Table 3

Responses on Effectiveness of QAP

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
e school gives priority to quality of teaching and rning activities to maintain credibility.	3.29	.926	3.74	.452
t of the recommendations and periodic responses e school makes changes on governance structures improve education quality	3.02	1.018	3.37	.761
e school has regular internal quality assurance ucture to review its frequent evaluation in diness for Adventist Accreditation Association's it.	2.89	3.488	2.95	.970
e school management allocates resources to prove Quality Assurance Practices for curriculum tructions	2.49	1.058	2.89	.937
e school strategically involves students in rning, evaluation and review of quality assurance ctices to meet their expectations for total quality provement	2.73	1.176	2.84	.765
e school provides motivation to stakeholders who l the institution positively establishing a culture of ality	2.56	1.079	2.95	.848
e school provides a conducive working vironment to retain workers for improved quality surance	2.42	1.174	2.89	.809
e school management is committed to staff velopment by providing training opportunities for h performance and empowerment to ensure ality.	2.82	1.142	3.26	.734
e leadership involvement of staff in Quality surance Practices and decision-making enhance ff commitment to serving students	2.83	1.039	3.26	.653
e school involvement of the local community in ing the school enhances the local and church mmunities perception of the institution	2.52	1.146	3.11	.876
fectiveness of Quality Assurance Practices lid N (listwise)	**2.76**	**.866**	**3.13**	**.589**

P5: Quality assurance practices are not effective due to frequent changes in leadership and teachers, inadequate resources, and a specific team to handle QAP issues at all levels.

ED1: QAP is not effective because AAA which is responsible is very far away. As a conference we need to form our teams and contextualized implementation instruments from AAA to help the situation of our schools.

BOM3: QAP is not effective. Since I started now the third year, we have never seen the union or division organize a seminar or workshop on QAP for our schools. It is really wanting.

The church at times organizes conventions for teachers using a lot of money but never make follow up for its implementation. Sometimes teachers are compelled to pay for the convention but another group 'special' from the same church into same venue are paid for every cost! This demoralizes and need to be addressed passionately for the level ground in the

ministry. This sentiment is supported by world church leaders as well as Inter-American Division church leaders that the teacher salary issue pressed at his heart. "Our teachers are ministers of the gospel in the classroom yet in some places in our territory, a pastor could earn approximately $800 per month, yet a teacher $150." Dr. Florez said, "It is one major reason a lot of our teachers leave our Adventist educational system, and that is something that has to change" (Florez as reported by Stevens, 2014).

Posed question, 'must you wait for the WKUC and EC-Division to build your house?

Answer: I tried to organize one but with financial challenges and teachers come and go including principals whom I am supposed to work with; you may not do much but the church system can help us coordinate sustainable programs. Collaborative study findings by Leu and Bryner in Ndaita (2015) observe that the principal's role is a significant factor in determining overall quality and effectiveness of many schools worldwide. However, they noted that this important role was prone to a wide variety of challenges mainly inadequate finances among others.

Studies done in Adventist schools in Hong Kong by the Education Bureau (2017) agree that the school development and accountability (SDA) framework aims to promote systematic and evidence-based school self-evaluation (SSE) in accordance with the spirit of school-based management. Complemented by external school review (ESR), SSE facilitates schools' continuous development and improvement as well as enhances their accountability. This is the ideal desire for WKUC Adventist schools to be heads and not tails in every undertaking.

Relationship between QA Implementation and Effectiveness

Is there a significant relationship between the extent of quality assurance policy implementation and the perceptions on the effectiveness of quality assurance practices?

This question was constructed to examine the significant relationship between the variables of the extent of implementation of quality assurance practices and the stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of quality assurance practices in Adventists schools. A Pearson correlation coefficient analysis done revealed the strength of relationship at significant level $\rho < 0.01$.   From Table 4, the correlation matrix table is clear that there is a positive moderate relationship between quality assurance policy implementation and effectiveness of quality assurance practices (r=0.772.)

Table 4

Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Policy Implementation

		Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Practices
Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies	Pearson Correlation	.772[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	103

Hence, there is a significant relationship between the implementation of quality assurance policies and the effectiveness of quality assurance practices. It follows, therefore, that the null hypothesis (H0) which stated that *there was no significant relationship between the extent of quality assurance implementation and the perceptions on the effectiveness of quality assurance practices was rejected.*

This implies that there is inadequate QAP implementation which accounts for its ineffectiveness.

Majkowski and Fleming as quoted by Mulwa, Kimiti, Kituka, & Muema (2011) ascertain that a school improvement impetus and authority emanating from outside the school do not produce the responsibility and commitment necessary to sustain consequential improvement.

Quality Assurance Policy Implementation Challenges

According to Chiaha and Nane-Ejeh (2015), one of the apparent challenges of quality assurance implementation was the education reform becoming necessary in pursuance of educational quality and effectiveness. "The new millennium is witnessing a lot of transformational challenges in almost all realms of life including the educational system, bringing about world class standards".

The 4-pont scale below was used by 103 respondents to determine challenges.

Weight	Range	Verbal interpretation
1	1.00 – 1.49	Not At All/Low/Poor
2	1.50 – 2.49	To A Lesser Extent/ Below average
3	2.50 – 3.49	To A Moderate Extent
4	3.50 – 4.00	To A Greater Extent

Table 5 indicates that both teachers and leaders viewed challenges to have affected QAP to a moderate extent of (M=2.55, SD=0.67) and (M= 2.80, SD=0.37) respectively. The deviations from the mean are high with the coefficient of variation of 26.3% and 13.2% respectively, though to a moderate extent but significantly affect the implementation of QAP.

All variable items of the challenges for teachers had means less than three except the insufficient resources for quality assurance practices (M=3.07, SD=1.04) agreeing with the leaders (M=3.42, SD=0.96). All the standard deviations for teachers were high above (SD=1.00) except item two with the lowest mean (M=2.07, SD 0.991).

From the interview it was revealed that:

S26: In our school quality assurance practices need improvements, some programs are not effective. Also, the leaders should involve students in some decision-making on issues concerning their learning in the school.

S34: School leaders should avoid debts and plan to recruit and retain teachers for good curriculum implementation.

P2: It was observed that the church had not fully embraced its wings for mission. Sometimes, it demoralizes when teachers go without salaries for two or three months; as leaders "we are in quagmire." We cannot push them to work with empty stomachs.

Quality assurance is all about standards; quality implementation, quality control, quality enhancement and quality audit are some of the processes. Although with inadequate implementation and moderate extent of challenge affecting QAP, this is reversed elsewhere in the Adventist system of education and can be emulated/borrow a leaf and contextualize it. For example, the Inter-American Division (IAD) president Leito as reported by Stevens (2014) reaffirms that, one of the major improvements in Adventist education in IAD has been infrastructure bringing together education as a whole system with all three levels—primary, secondary and university. That has generated more participation where unions are taking a stronger role to improve the infrastructure for the schools they oversee.

Table 5

Responses on Challenges of Policy Implementation

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of commitment of the institutional leaders to quality assurance improved performance	2.51	1.16	2.37	1.17
Interference of government regulations supports the Quality Assurance Practices of the school.	2.07	.991	2.00	.943
Lack of commitment of teachers to academics for quality	2.26	1.22	2.42	1.07
Difficulty in meeting the Adventist Accreditation Association's requirement and expectations	2.52	1.02	2.74	.872
Insufficient resources for Quality Assurance Practices.	3.07	1.04	3.42	.961
Lack of students commitment to quality learning	2.60	1.17	2.95	.911
Unfavorable institutional climate for Quality Assurance Practices	2.52	1.09	2.58	.902
Inability to meet the expectations of the community and stakeholders	2.56	1.18	2.95	.911
Lack of community support in achieving quality assurance	2.68	1.14	2.89	.875
Failure to include quality assurance in the institutional strategic plan	2.67	1.12	3.11	.994
Failure to follow, update and review institutional strategic plan	2.56	1.10	3.16	.834
Difficult to complete the self-study instrument for quality assurance	2.61	1.10	3.05	.970
Challenges Facing Quality Assurance Practices	**2.55**	**.670**	**2.80**	**.371**

To identify the different challenges that affect the effectiveness of quality assurance practices, a multiple regression analysis was done. The results are presented in table 6.

When interference of government regulations is combined with the earlier the adjusted (R2 =0.167, R= 0.434) that is both could account for about 17%, when it was considered separately it could be 7% still lower than the earlier variable's effect. Finally, when all the four are considered together the adjusted (R2 =0.229) with (R = 0.516) which accounts for 22.9% about only 23% which means other factors not considered here have a significant effect on implementation of QAP. *The leading predictor of 'failure to follow institutional strategic plan' (F=9.573, p=0.003) was less than p=0.05 and is statistically significant.*

A strategy is a set of activities or processes that an organization intends to use in order to achieve its set goals and aims. Nyagah (2015) alluded in her study that a strategic plan helps to provide direction and focus for all employees. If an organization has little idea where it is headed, it will wander aimlessly with priorities changing constantly and employees confused about the purpose of their jobs. Supported by Ndaita (2015) *asserts that the key constraints to the principal's quality assurance role were lack of adequate finances, inadequacy instructional resources, high teacher-student ratio, overloaded curriculum, lack of adequate government support and cooperation from school community.*

In a nutshell, the Adventist education system requires a change, which is the only "constant" as Ng, (2014) ascertains that education system requires a culture change for the twenty-first century customer's satisfaction. Training involves culture change for continuous improvement, management based on facts and respect for people.

Table 6

Model Summary for Challenges Predictors of Effectiveness of QAP

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.323[a]	.105	.094	.82407
2	.433[b]	.187	.167	.78982
3	.475[c]	.226	.197	.77573
4	.516[d]	.266	.229	.76010

a. Predictors: (Constant), Failure to follow institutional strategic plan

b. Predictors: (Constant), Failure to follow institutional strategic plan, Interference of government regulations

c. Predictors: (Constant), Failure to follow institutional strategic plan, Interference of government regulations , Difficulty in meeting AAA requirements

d. Predictors: (Constant), Failure to follow institutional strategic plan, Interference of government regulations , Difficulty in meeting AAA requirements, Inability to meet community expectations

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion drawn from the findings is that there is moderate implementation and effectiveness of the QAP policy in WKCU Adventist schools. AAA practices are supposed to be contextualized and owned within the policy frameworks for effective implementation of QAP. School administrators who are key implementers should be empowered and equipped but accountable to the entire process. Managers and church leaders should transparently delegate and involve teams for implementation of QAP at different levels of the church education system. The implementers in schools should be empowered and equipped to do their job well within the administrative framework. The external teams should frequently oversee the practice in schools.

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