

POLICY BRIEF

Three Critical Areas for Action: Building QASO Capacity for Effective Use of School-Level Data

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) support education improvement by monitoring teaching practices, reviewing school processes, and generating school-level data for decision-making. This policy brief draws on a systematic review of 24 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025 on the capacities required by QASOs to effectively utilize school-level data.
- The review highlights three critical capacities for effective QASO practice: data interpretation and use, professional relationships with teachers, and sound judgment in evaluating classroom practice. Gaps in these areas reduce the value of quality assurance findings for school improvement and education decision-making.



INTRODUCTION

QASOs collect school-level data, observe classroom practices, and review school processes to guide improvement. However, effective quality assurance requires more than collecting data. QASOs must interpret evidence, engage constructively with teachers, and provide feedback that supports professional growth.

Kenya continues to face significant QASO capacity challenges. A 2020 Auditor-General performance audit found only 385 QASOs in post against an established requirement of 858, leaving a shortfall of 473 officers across 286 sub-counties. Although the Ministry of Education recruited an additional 300 QASOs in 2026, strengthening staffing alone will not ensure effective quality assurance. QASOs also require the capacity to interpret and use school-level data to support school improvement. Without these capacities, quality assurance risks becoming a compliance exercise rather than a driver of school improvement.

Evidence from the systematic review shows that data becomes useful when QASOs transform data into actionable insights. Strengthening competencies in data interpretation, communication, and instructional evaluation is therefore essential for effective quality assurance.

METHODOLOGY

This brief draws on a systematic review of 24 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025. The review examined QASO capacities, factors affecting school-level data use, and strategies for strengthening quality assurance systems in Kenya and selected Sub-Saharan African contexts.



KEY CAPACITIES NEEDED BY QASOs

1. Using Data, Not Just Collecting It

Effective quality assurance requires QASOs to move beyond data collection. They need skills to interpret data, identify patterns, and translate findings into recommendations for school improvement. While digital tools can strengthen data collection and reporting, they cannot replace the analytical skills QASOs need to interpret data, identify trends, and use evidence for decision-making.

2. Building Trust, Not Just Conducting Assessments

Quality assurance depends on constructive relationships between QASOs and teachers. Supportive approaches encourage teachers to discuss challenges openly and provide data that guides improvement. When quality assurance focuses mainly on compliance, professional dialogue may weaken. QASOs therefore need communication, coaching, trust-building, and feedback skills.

3. Evaluating Teaching: A Different Skill from Teaching

Teaching experience provides valuable professional knowledge, but classroom evaluation requires additional competencies. QASOs need skills in classroom observation, applying professional standards, providing evidence-based feedback, and supporting teacher improvement. Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) should prepare QASOs to evaluate instructional practices consistently and provide guidance that strengthens classroom practice.

KEY CAPACITIES NEEDED BY QASOs

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) in the ministry of education should move beyond a narrow focus on data collection and compliance monitoring. QASOs require competencies that enable them to interpret evidence, communicate findings, and support professional improvement.

To strengthen QASO capacity DQAS need to:

1. Conduct a national competency assessment of serving QASOs to identify professional development needs that will guide targeted training by the end of FY2027/28.
2. Strengthen QASO training in data interpretation, evidence use, and evidence-informed decision-making alongside digital reporting skills by FY2028/29.
3. Integrate communication, coaching, trust-building, and constructive feedback into QASO preparation and continuous professional development from FY2028/29, embedded in ongoing CPD cycles.
4. Establish a standardized preparation and certification framework for QASOs to ensure officers possess the competencies required for effective quality assurance by FY2029/30.

CONCLUSION

Effective QASO practice requires more than collecting school-level data. QASOs must interpret evidence, build professional trust, and evaluate teaching practices effectively. Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards, should strengthen QASO preparation and continuous professional development by integrating competency assessment, data use training, interpersonal skills development, and instructional evaluation. This will improve the quality and usefulness of school-level evidence for school improvement and education decision-making.

Source: Ranji, J.K., Odhiambo, J.O., Muthomi, K., Mahamud, H., Kasisi, R., Chepkemai, M., Arisa, C., Selina, S., & Ochieng', V. Quality Assurance Officers' Capacity to Utilize School-Level Data for Informing Policy and Practice in Basic Education (unpublished manuscript).