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Strengthening Quality Assurance Mechanisms In Rural Basic Schools In Nigeria: The Role Of Subeb, Communities And Technology

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Abstract

Despite the mandate of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act 2004, quality assurance (QA) in Nigerian rural Basic schools remains weak, resulting in poor learning outcomes, teacher absenteeism, and low pupil retention. Existing SUBEB monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are largely centralized, periodic, and paper-based, making it difficult to detect and address challenges in real-time, especially in hard-to-reach rural communities. This conceptual paper examines how State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), rural communities, and technology can be integrated to strengthen Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation in rural Basic schools in Nigeria. Anchored on Total Quality Management Theory and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, the paper argues that sustainable quality education requires decentralizing QA responsibilities beyond state agencies. The paper proposes the "SCT-QA Model: SUBEB-Community-Technology Quality Assurance Model" as a framework for improving rural school oversight. In this model, SUBEB provides policy, standards and training; communities through School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) undertake local monitoring and accountability; while technology tools such as mobile apps, EMIS dashboards, and Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) feedback enable real-time data collection and transparency. The paper discusses the benefits, challenges and implementation strategies of the model. It concludes that strengthening QA through the SCT-QA Model will promote quality instruction, inclusive access, and learner retention in rural communities, in line with national and global education goals.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation, Rural Basic Education, SUBEB (State Universal Basic Education Board), Community Participation, Educational Technology, Learner Retention

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1. INTRODUCTION

The introductory part of this paper discussed the background to the study, stated the problem, purpose, significance and scope of the paper as follows:

1.1 Background to the Study

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 2004 marked a pivotal moment in Nigeria's educational development by establishing the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) with a mandate to provide free, compulsory, and quality basic education for all school-age children. Central to this mandate is the quality assurance function—the systematic monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of educational activities to ensure standards are met and learning outcomes achieved (Ayua, 2011). This oversight mechanism was designed to guarantee that all Basic schools, regardless of location, deliver instruction meeting national standards. Quality assurance is particularly crucial in Nigeria, where the education system serves over 40 million children across diverse geographical and socioeconomic contexts. The Act's framers recognized that without effective monitoring and evaluation, universal basic education would remain unattainable. Consequently, they established a comprehensive framework assigning oversight responsibilities to UBEC at the federal level and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) at the state level, creating a multi-tiered accountability system.

However, nearly two decades after the Act's enactment, the quality of education in Nigerian rural Basic schools remains persistently poor. These schools face multifaceted challenges including dilapidated infrastructure, acute qualified teacher shortages, chronic teacher absenteeism, inadequate instructional materials, and extremely low learning outcomes (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; World Bank, 2018). These challenges are compounded by geographical remoteness, making regular supervision from state education authorities extremely difficult. The United Nations Children's Fund (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; UNICEF, 2023) reports that rural schools are disproportionately affected by quality deficits, with rural children significantly more likely to be out of school or learning below grade level compared to their urban counterparts.

Rural schools possess unique characteristics that render them particularly difficult to monitor effectively. Distance and poor road networks make physical visits by Quality Assurance officers costly and infrequent. Insecurity in some areas further compounds these logistical challenges. Moreover, the lack of reliable data systems means that challenges often go undocumented and unaddressed until they escalate into crises (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998; Caldwell & Spinks, 1998; World Bank, 2023). This data gap is especially concerning given that the Basic Education sector must serve millions of children across diverse contexts. The inability to monitor and respond to quality issues in real-time perpetuates a cycle of poor quality, low retention, and diminished educational outcomes.

Ayua (2012a) emphasized that a nation's health and wealth are anchored on its education, and educational success depends largely on teacher quality. He argued that no education can rise above its teachers' quality, underscoring the need for effective teaching strategies and quality assurance mechanisms. This is particularly critical in rural Basic schools where teacher quality issues are most pronounced. Teachers are the most indispensable factor in the school system; without effective teachers, even if all other things are provided, achieving the desired aims and objectives becomes very difficult, if not impossible. This underscores the importance of effective quality assurance mechanisms that ensure teachers are adequately prepared, supported, and supervised.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Existing quality assurance mechanisms employed by SUBEBs across Nigeria are fundamentally ill-suited

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to rural Basic education realities. These mechanisms are predominantly centralized, with Quality Assurance officers operating from state capitals and zonal offices. Monitoring visits are typically periodic, occurring only once or twice annually in most rural schools. Reporting systems remain largely paper-based, characterized by lengthy forms, slow information transmission, and significant delays in data analysis and feedback. This approach creates a substantial gap between problem identification and meaningful response, allowing quality issues to persist and worsen over time (Akinsolu et al., 2016).

The consequences of this systemic weakness are severe and far-reaching. In rural schools where Quality Assurance visits are infrequent, teacher absenteeism can go unchecked for months. Teachers who are regularly absent not only deprive learners of instructional time but also erode community confidence in the education system. Instruction quality suffers because teachers receive little or no professional feedback, supervision, or support. Instructional materials, where they exist, may be inadequate or inappropriate. Learning outcomes, as measured by standardized assessments, remain persistently low, with significant proportions of rural learners unable to read or perform basic numeracy by the end of primary school (Fullan & Watson, 2000; United Nations Educational Scientific and cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2024).

Ayua and Eriba (2015) demonstrated that teachers' creative behaviours positively influence the development of entrepreneurial skills among pupils. However, they found that teachers' infrequent exhibition of creative behaviours due to systemic problems hinders expected results. This finding highlights a critical gap in current Quality Assurance mechanisms: they focus primarily on compliance and inspection rather than on supporting and encouraging creative, effective teaching practices that can enhance learning outcomes.

Furthermore, ineffective Quality Assurance mechanisms contribute to low learner retention. When parents perceive poor education quality, they are less motivated to keep their children enrolled, particularly when schooling's opportunity cost is high for impoverished rural families. The combination of poor instruction, unengaged teachers, and inadequate learning outcomes creates a self-reinforcing cycle: low-quality leads to low retention, which reduces school funding and further erodes quality (Fullan & Watson, 2000; UNICEF, 2023). Breaking this cycle requires a fundamental rethinking of how quality assurance is conceptualized and operationalized in rural Basic education.

Ayua (2017) identified teacher-related factors that inhibit effective teaching, including mannerism, lateness, unnecessary repetition, transfer of aggression, and failing to mark assignments. He emphasized that these teacher behaviours can significantly undermine Quality Assurance effectiveness if not addressed through proper monitoring and professional development. This paper argues that the current approach to Quality Assurance (characterized by top-down, periodic, and paper-based monitoring) is inadequate to ensure quality in rural Basic schools. Addressing this challenge requires an integrated approach that leverages the complementary strengths of SUBEB, rural communities, and technology.

1.3 Purpose of the Paper

This paper aims to examine how SUBEBs, rural communities, and technology can be integrated to strengthen Quality Assurance, Monitoring, and Evaluation in Nigerian rural Basic schools. Specifically, the paper analyses the current state of Quality Assurance mechanisms and identifies key challenges undermining their effectiveness. It proposes a conceptual model—the SCT-QA Model (SUBEB-Community-Technology Quality Assurance Model)—that integrates institutional oversight, community participation, and technology-enabled systems for enhanced Quality Assurance. The paper discusses the benefits, challenges, and implementation strategies for operationalizing the proposed model in Nigerian rural Basic schools and explores the policy, practice, and research implications of adopting an

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integrated approach to quality assurance.

1.4 Significance of the Paper

This paper holds significance for multiple stakeholders in the Nigerian Basic education sector. For SUBEB and UBEC, it provides a framework for rethinking Quality Assurance strategies and investing in innovative approaches to address persistent rural education challenges. For Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), it offers practical insights into how community engagement and technology can strengthen oversight at the local level. For Head Teachers and School-Based Management Committees, it highlights the importance of their roles in school-level Quality Assurance and provides a vision for how they can be supported. For communities, parents, and civil society organizations, it underscores the critical role of community participation in ensuring educational quality and accountability. Finally, for development partners and NGOs, it identifies strategic entry points for supporting Quality Assurance improvements. Ayua (2015) emphasized that for effective child education to occur, teachers and parents must work as a team with sound knowledge of what children wish they knew, did, or avoided. This principle extends to quality assurance: effective Quality Assurance requires collaboration among all stakeholders, including SUBEB officials, teachers, parents, and community members.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This paper focuses on rural public Basic schools in Nigeria, encompassing both primary schools and Junior Secondary Schools (JSS). The rural context is defined by geographical remoteness, limited infrastructure and services access, and the socioeconomic challenges characterizing rural communities. The paper focuses specifically on public schools, as these are the primary responsibility of SUBEB and are most affected by the Quality Assurance challenges discussed. While drawing on examples and evidence from various states, the paper adopts a national perspective applicable across Nigeria's diverse rural contexts.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

This section writes on the concepts involved in the research work. Pointing out how the concepts are operationalized in the research.

2.1 Quality Assurance in Basic Education

Quality Assurance in Basic education refers to systematic processes and mechanisms through which educational quality is planned, monitored, assessed, and improved. According to UBEC, Quality Assurance encompasses establishing standards, monitoring compliance with those standards, evaluating learning outcomes, and implementing corrective measures to address identified deficiencies (UBEC, 2012). A comprehensive QA framework addresses multiple dimensions: inputs (infrastructure, materials, qualified teachers), processes (teaching practices, school leadership, community engagement), outputs (learning outcomes, completion rates), and outcomes (long-term educational impact on individuals and society). Effective Quality Assurance requires not only problem identification but also the capacity to respond appropriately and timely. Ayua (2012b) discussed continuous assessment implications in Nigeria's education system, highlighting the importance of systematic, cumulative, and comprehensive evaluation. These principles apply equally to quality assurance: Quality Assurance must be continuous rather than episodic, comprehensive rather than narrow, and focused on improvement rather than merely judgment.

2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

While often used interchangeably, monitoring and evaluation serve distinct but complementary functions. Monitoring is the continuous, systematic collection and analysis of information to track progress toward educational goals. It addresses questions such as: Are teachers present? Are instructional materials

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available? Are learners attending regularly? Is the curriculum being implemented as intended? Monitoring provides real-time information enabling timely intervention and corrective action. Evaluation, by contrast, is a periodic, in-depth assessment of educational programs and outcomes. Evaluation addresses questions of impact, effectiveness, and efficiency: Are learning outcomes improving? Is the education system achieving its goals? What factors contribute to or hinder success? Both are essential for quality assurance, but they operate at different frequencies and serve different purposes (UNESCO, 2005). The weakness in Nigerian rural Basic schools lies primarily in the monitoring function, that is, the lack of real-time data on school performance that would enable prompt response to emerging problems.

Ayua (2011) found that science teachers' improvisation level was low, and in most cases they did not involve learners in the improvisation process, leading to poor academic performance. Similarly, Quality Assurance monitoring that does not involve communities and provide real-time feedback cannot effectively address quality challenges.

2.3 Rural Basic Schools

Rural Basic schools in Nigeria are defined by their location in communities with relatively low population density, limited access to urban infrastructure and services, and dependence on agriculture and natural resources for livelihoods. These schools face distinctive challenges shaping education quality. Geographical remoteness makes supervision and support from education authorities difficult and costly. Poor road networks and limited public transportation make it hard for teachers to reach schools and for children to attend regularly. Inadequate infrastructure including lack of electricity, clean water, and appropriate classroom facilities is common. Telecommunications and internet connectivity are often limited or non-existent, restricting access to information and technology-enabled learning and management tools (Volansky & Friedman, 2003; World Bank, 2018). These contextual factors must be considered when designing QA mechanisms for rural schools. Ayua and Eriba (2015) found that both private and public primary school teachers had high cluster mean ratings agreeing that entrepreneurial skills ranging from managerial, technical to personal skills can be developed among pupils. This finding suggests that despite rural school challenges, quality improvement potential exists if appropriate support and monitoring mechanisms are in place.

2.4 Community Participation

Community participation in Basic education refers to the active involvement of community members (including parents, local leaders, and civil society organizations) in school governance, management, and support. In the Nigerian Basic education system, community participation is institutionalized through School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). SBMCs are statutory bodies with specific responsibilities for school oversight, including monitoring teacher attendance, ensuring instructional materials availability, and supporting school improvement efforts. PTAs provide a platform for parents to engage with teachers, discuss student progress, and contribute to school development. Effective community participation is essential for quality assurance because communities have local knowledge, are directly affected by educational quality, and can provide accountability complementing formal government oversight (Sofoluwe & Akinsolu, 2015). Ayua (2015) outlined what children wish their teachers and parents knew about their learning and development, emphasizing that children need gentle correction in love, feel secure, hate pretence, need patient trainers, love experimenting, and need enabling environments. This understanding is crucial for communities engaged in Quality Assurance, highlighting the need for child-cantered approaches considering learners' perspectives and needs.

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2.5 Educational Technology for Quality Assurance

Educational technology for Quality Assurance encompasses digital tools and platforms that can enhance data collection, analysis, and use for educational improvement. Key technologies include Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) providing comprehensive data on schools, teachers, learners, and resources; mobile applications enabling real-time data collection and reporting; dashboards visualizing school performance data for decision-makers; and communication platforms facilitating feedback and information sharing among stakeholders (World Bank, 2023). For rural Quality Assurance, technologies that do not require continuous internet connectivity, such as USSD-based reporting, offline-capable mobile apps, and SMS-based communication, are particularly relevant. Technology's potential to address paper-based, periodic monitoring system limitations in rural contexts is substantial but requires implementation with attention to infrastructure constraints and digital literacy needs. Ayua (2021) demonstrated that teacher-learner improvised materials significantly improve academic performance among mixedability pupils in Basic Science, suggesting that technology-enhanced assessment tools supporting improvised and creative teaching approaches could be particularly effective. Similarly, Mursalin et al. (2025) introduced the Authentic Assessment Based on Teaching and Learning Trajectory (AABTLT) as a conceptual model for sustainable assessment integrated into the learning process, aligning learning objectives, instructional activities, and authentic assessment along structured learning trajectories—a model with implications for Nigerian Quality Assurance systems.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The section points out the theory which guides the study and how relevant is the theory to the study.

3.1 Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy emphasizing continuous improvement, customer focus, and the involvement of all organization members in quality enhancement (Deming, 1986). This theory provides a robust foundation for understanding how quality assurance should operate in educational contexts. TQM is grounded in several core principles with direct relevance to education quality assurance. First, quality is everyone's responsibility, not the sole domain of specialized quality assurance units. In Basic education, this means SUBEB officials, school principals, teachers, communities, and learners all have roles in ensuring educational quality. Second, TQM emphasizes data-driven decision-making: quality improvement must be informed by accurate, timely performance data. Third, TQM insists on continuous improvement: quality is not a destination but a never-ending journey of learning, adaptation, and enhancement. Fourth, TQM views organizations as interconnected systems; improving quality requires attention to the entire system, not just individual components.

Applied to Nigerian rural Basic schools' Quality Assurance challenges, TQM provides powerful theoretical justification for moving beyond the current "SUBEB-only" approach. The theory suggests that sustainable quality improvement cannot be achieved through external monitoring alone; it requires active engagement of all stakeholders, including communities, in the quality assurance process. TQM's emphasis on continuous improvement underscores periodic Quality Assurance visits' inadequacy: quality issues must be identified and addressed in real-time, not just once or twice annually. Finally, TQM's systems perspective highlights the need to address systemic barriers (infrastructure deficits, teacher shortages, data gaps) undermining quality in rural schools. Ayua (2019) emphasized that creative teaching is essential for developing creative and scientific learners who can prepare themselves for individual and societal survival, arguing that if one keeps doing things the same way, one will continue to have the same results. This principle, central to TQM's emphasis on continuous improvement, is particularly relevant for Quality Assurance systems that must evolve to meet changing challenges and opportunities.

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3.2 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E)

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) is an approach that actively involves stakeholders (particularly those most directly affected by programs) in defining quality indicators, collecting data, analysing findings, and making decisions about program improvement (Chambers,

1994; Estrella & Gaventa, 1998). This theoretical framework challenges traditional top-down approaches where external experts determine quality criteria and conduct evaluations without meaningful community input. PM&E is grounded in several key principles: local ownership (communities should be empowered to take ownership of monitoring and evaluation processes); valuing local knowledge (community members have unique insights into educational quality not captured by standard indicators); promoting empowerment (participatory monitoring builds community capacity and strengthens local accountability); and emphasizing learning and action (monitoring's purpose is not just producing reports but informing and guiding improvement efforts).

PM&E is particularly relevant to rural Basic education in Nigeria because it addresses centralized, external monitoring limitations. In PM&E, communities are not passive recipients of monitoring visits from SUBEB officials; they are active participants in defining quality meaning, identifying problems, and taking action to address them. PM&E aligns with the existing institutional framework of SBMCs, intended to provide community oversight of schools. By strengthening SBMC capacity to engage in participatory monitoring and linking community-level monitoring with technology-enabled reporting to SUBEB, a more responsive and accountable Quality Assurance system can be established. Ayua and Eriba (2015) found a very wide gap between teachers' acceptance of creative behaviours' influence on entrepreneurial skills development and the frequency of exhibiting creative behaviours during lessons. This gap between awareness and practice is a challenge PM&E can help address: by involving communities and teachers in defining quality indicators and monitoring progress, PM&E can bridge the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities.

3.3 Integration of Theories and Link to the Study

The integration of TQM and PM&E provides a robust theoretical foundation for the SCTQA Model proposed in this paper. TQM establishes that quality is everyone's responsibility and emphasizes continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making. PM&E provides methodology for operationalizing community participation in monitoring and evaluation. Together, these theories suggest that effective Quality Assurance in rural Basic schools requires: (1) shared responsibility among SUBEB, communities, and schools; (2) continuous rather than periodic monitoring; (3) real-time data to inform decision-making; and (4) community empowerment to take ownership of quality improvement. These theoretical principles are directly operationalized in the SCT-QA Model, which integrates institutional oversight (SUBEB), community participation (SBMCs and PTAs), and technology-enabled systems to create a more comprehensive and responsive Quality Assurance mechanism. Ayua (2015) emphasized that for effective child education, teachers and parents must work as a team with sound knowledge of what children wish they knew, did, or avoided. This teamwork principle extends to the broader Quality Assurance system: effective quality assurance requires collaboration among all stakeholders, including SUBEB, communities, teachers, and learners. The SCT-QA Model operationalizes this collaborative approach by defining clear roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder and creating mechanisms for communication and feedback among them.

4. REVIEW OF CURRENT QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS IN NIGERIAN RURAL BASIC SCHOOLS

This explains in clear terms the mechanism of Quality Assurance in rural basic schools in Nigeria, pointing

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out it challenges too.

4.1 UBEC and SUBEB Structures for Quality Assurance

The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) has established a quality assurance framework, which is implemented through SUBEBs across Nigeria. At the national level, UBEC provides policy guidance, sets standards, and coordinates quality assurance across states. At the state level, SUBEBs have dedicated Quality Assurance departments or units responsible for monitoring school performance, providing support to schools, and reporting to UBEC. Quality Assurance officers are typically deployed at zonal or local government levels, responsible for visiting schools and providing supervisory support. The Annual School Census provides comprehensive data on school enrolment, infrastructure, and teachers. School Support Officers work with schools to improve management and instruction. In principle, this structure provides a comprehensive framework for quality assurance in Basic education.

4.2 Challenges Confronting Current QA Mechanisms

Despite formal Quality Assurance structures, these mechanisms face profound challenges undermining their effectiveness, particularly in rural areas. Monitoring visit frequency is grossly inadequate, with Quality Assurance officers often able to visit rural schools only once or twice annually due to logistical constraints including poor roads, lack of vehicles, and limited field visit budgets. This infrequent contact means that problems (teacher absenteeism, inadequate instruction, missing materials) may persist for months without detection or intervention. Reporting systems remain largely paper-based and slow, with Quality Assurance officers completing lengthy forms during visits submitted to SUBEB headquarters for data entry and analysis. The time lag between data collection and actionable information availability often runs into weeks or months, by which time the situation may have changed significantly. This paper-based approach also makes it difficult to aggregate data across schools and identify systemic patterns.

Community roles in Quality Assurance are also limited. While SBMCs and PTAs exist in principle, many are weak, poorly trained, and lack capacity to effectively monitor school performance. Community members may not understand their roles and responsibilities, may lack skills to collect and analyse data, or may feel powerless to hold schools accountable. In some cases, SBMCs exist in name only, meeting infrequently or not at all. Data collected through Quality Assurance processes is often not used effectively for decision-making. Even when school performance data is collected, it may not be analysed timely, shared with schools and communities, or inform resource allocation and policy decisions. As a result, Quality Assurance processes become purely bureaucratic exercises rather than tools for quality improvement. Finally, systemic challenges facing rural schools, such as; infrastructure deficits, teacher shortages, funding constraints are often beyond Quality Assurance mechanism capacity to address. Quality Assurance visits may identify these problems, but without resources and political will to address them, problem identification does not lead to solutions.

Thus, Ayua (2012a) found significant imbalance between primary science teacher education course content and that of pupils in primary school, leading to ineffective teacher production and performance. This imbalance affects teaching quality that Quality Assurance systems are meant to monitor and improve. Similarly, Ayua (2017) identified teacher-related factors inhibiting effective teaching, including mannerism, lateness, unnecessary repetition, transfer of aggression, and failing to mark assignments. These teacher behaviours can significantly undermine Quality Assurance mechanism effectiveness if not addressed through proper monitoring and professional development.

4.3 Effects of Weak QA Mechanisms on Educational Quality

Weak Quality Assurance mechanisms' consequences are evident in poor educational outcomes observed in

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rural Basic schools. Teacher absenteeism is endemic, with absentee rates significantly higher in rural than urban schools. In the absence of effective monitoring, frequently absent teachers face few consequences, and instruction quality suffers. Learners receive less instructional time, and when teachers are present, they may be poorly prepared and unmotivated. Lack of supervision and support also means teachers receive little feedback on instructional practice and limited professional development opportunities. Instructional materials quality is another area affected by weak Quality Assurance. Without effective monitoring, schools may fail to receive learning material allocations, or materials may be inadequate for learners' needs. Lack of teaching aids and resources forces teachers to rely on lecture-based instruction, which is ineffective for developing higher-order thinking skills and meeting diverse learner needs (Ayua & Jato, 2012; Ayua, 2021).

Learning outcomes in rural Basic schools are persistently low. Assessments consistently show rural learners underperform their urban counterparts in literacy, numeracy, and other basic competencies. This learning gap widens over time as rural learners fall further behind each year. The cumulative effect of poor instruction, inadequate materials, and inadequate supervision is that many rural children complete Basic education without acquiring foundational skills needed to succeed in life. Low learning outcomes, in turn, contribute to low learner retention. When parents perceive schooling is not delivering value, they are less willing to keep children enrolled, particularly when schooling costs are a significant burden for impoverished families. Children not learning see little reason to stay in school and may drop out to engage in economic activities or, for girls, marry early. The cycle of low quality, low retention, and low outcomes is self-reinforcing and requires comprehensive intervention to break. Ayua and Eriba (2015) found that teachers' infrequent exhibition of creative behaviours during Basic Science and Technology lessons due to systemic problems cannot yield expected results, underscoring the importance of Quality Assurance systems that address systemic barriers to effective teaching, including those related to teacher training, resources, and support.

5. THE SCT-QA MODEL: A THREE-PILLAR FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENED QUALITY ASSURANCE.

This section addressed the pillars of the model and their interaction for a better reinforcement.

5.1 Overview of the Model

The SCT-QA Model (SUBEB-Community-Technology Quality Assurance Model) is a conceptual framework for strengthening quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation in rural Basic schools. The model is built on the premise that effective Quality Assurance requires the integration of three complementary pillars: institutional oversight provided by SUBEB, community participation and accountability, and technology-enabled systems for data collection and communication. These three pillars are not independent but interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The model represents a fundamental shift from the current "SUBEB-only" approach to a more distributed, responsive, and sustainable system of quality assurance. Grounded in TQM and PM&E theoretical principles, the SCT-QA Model adopts the principles that quality is everyone's responsibility, continuous improvement requires real-time data, quality improvement must be addressed at the systems level, and community participation, local ownership, and empowerment are essential. The model operationalizes these principles in a practical framework tailored to the Nigerian rural Basic education context.

5.2 Pillar 1: SUBEB Institutional Oversight

The first pillar is SUBEB institutional oversight, encompassing the policy, standards, training, and quality assurance functions that are SUBEB's formal responsibility. In the SCT-QA Model, SUBEB's role is not

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diminished but transformed: instead of attempting to do all Quality Assurance functions centrally, SUBEB focuses on setting standards, providing capacity building, coordinating quality improvement efforts, and responding to data flowing from communities and technology systems. Key functions include developing rural-specific Quality Assurance rubrics recognizing rural schools' unique challenges and contexts, addressing not only standard quality indicators but also factors such as community engagement, local resource mobilization, and adaptive teaching practices. SUBEB would also be responsible for training LGEA Quality Assurance officers, head teachers, and SBMC members in their respective roles, covering Quality Assurance procedures, data collection, analysis, reporting, and technology tool use. SUBEB would also play a critical role in creating an enabling environment for community participation in Quality Assurance, including ensuring SBMCs are properly constituted and functioning, developing community monitoring materials and guidelines, and establishing mechanisms for communities to report concerns and receive feedback. SUBEB would also be responsible for analysing Quality Assurance data, identifying systemic issues, and informing policy and resource allocation decisions. Ayua (2019) emphasized that creative teachers need imaginative approaches and a repertoire of engaging activities to develop children's capacity for original ideas and actions in creative learning, suggesting that SUBEB oversight should focus not only on compliance but also on fostering creative teaching practices that enhance learning outcomes. Ayua (2012a) emphasized that there will be no effective primary science teaching without effective teacher education programmes; this principle applies equally to Quality Assurance—there will be no effective Quality Assurance without effective institutional capacity and support.

5.3 Pillar 2: Community Participation and Accountability

The second pillar is community participation and accountability, operationalized through SBMCs and PTAs. In the model, communities are not passive recipients of Quality Assurance visits from SUBEB officials but active participants in monitoring school performance and holding schools accountable. SBMCs in the SCT-QA Model have expanded roles beyond their traditional functions. In addition to statutory responsibilities, SBMC members would be trained to conduct regular school visits, observe teaching, monitor teacher attendance, review school records, and collect data on learner enrolment and retention. They would also be responsible for implementing "school quality scorecards" providing transparent assessment of school performance across key indicators. These scorecards would be shared with the community, creating accountability and mobilizing community support for school improvement. PTAs would complement SBMC functions by focusing on parent engagement, student welfare, and communication between schools and families. PTAs would ensure parents understand the importance of school attendance and that enrolment and retention barriers are addressed. PTAs would also provide feedback to schools on parent concerns and suggestions for improvement. The community pillar also includes mechanisms for community feedback, such as suggestion boxes, community meetings, and parent surveys, ensuring parent and community member perspectives are incorporated into school improvement efforts. Ayua (2015) emphasized that for effective child education to occur, teachers and parents must work as a team with sound knowledge of what children wish they knew, did, or avoided. This teamwork principle extends to Quality Assurance: effective quality assurance requires collaboration between schools and communities, with each playing complementary roles in ensuring quality education. Ayua (2021) highlighted that for effective child education, teachers and parents must work as a team with sound knowledge of what children wish they knew, did, or avoided; this teamwork is essential for effective community engagement in Quality Assurance.

5.4 Pillar 3: Technology-Enabled Systems

The third pillar is technology-enabled systems enabling real-time data collection, analysis, communication, and feedback. Technology is the enabling factor making the other two pillars' integration possible: without

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technology, community monitoring data cannot be transmitted to SUBEB timely, and SUBEB cannot provide rapid feedback and support to schools. The technology pillar includes several key components. A mobile Quality Assurance application would enable head teachers and SBMC members to collect and submit school performance data from their mobile phones, designed to work offline with data automatically synchronized when connectivity is available, covering key indicators such as teacher attendance, learner enrolment, infrastructure status, and instructional materials availability. An EMIS dashboard would provide visual, realtime display of school performance data for decision-makers at SUBEB, LGEA, and school levels, enabling users to track trends, identify struggling schools, and monitor intervention impacts, with data displayed in user-friendly formats including maps, charts, and graphs. USSD-based feedback systems would enable parents and community members to provide feedback on school quality without requiring smartphones or internet connectivity; by dialling a short code, community members could report concerns, provide praise, or make suggestions, ensuring even the most remote and digitally excluded communities can participate in Quality Assurance processes. Geotagged reporting would enable Quality Assurance visits and school data to be linked to specific locations, ensuring accuracy and enabling geographic quality pattern analysis, helping SUBEB identify areas needing most support and track improvement over time. Ayua (2012a), and Ouchi and Segal (2003), recommended that teacher education curricula should be improved to serve primary school task requirements, including basic practical improvisation skills acquisition; similarly, technology integration in Quality Assurance requires teachers and communities to acquire necessary digital skills. Mursalin et al. (2025) demonstrated that authentic assessment based on teaching and learning trajectory provides a conceptual model for sustainable assessment integrated into the learning process, suggesting that technology-enabled Quality Assurance systems should focus not only on compliance monitoring but also on formative assessment supporting learning.

5.5 Interactions Among the Three Pillars

The SCT-QA Model is not merely a collection of three independent pillars but an integrated system in which the pillars interact and reinforce each other. Communities collect data on school performance through their monitoring activities and feed this data into the technology system. The technology system transmits the data to SUBEB, where it is analysed and used to inform decisions. SUBEB provides capacity building and support to communities, strengthening their monitoring effectiveness. Schools, in turn, receive feedback and support based on collected and analysed data. This interaction creates a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement. Communities are empowered to take ownership of school quality. Technology enables rapid problem identification and progress tracking. SUBEB provides institutional support and resources. Schools are held accountable and supported to improve. This cycle of data collection, feedback, action, and improvement represents the ideal of continuous quality improvement that TQM envisions. Ayua and Eriba (2015) found a wide gap between teachers' acceptance of creative behaviours' influence on entrepreneurial skills development and the frequency of exhibiting creative behaviours during lessons. The SCT-QA Model addresses this gap by creating continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms that can help bridge the divide between awareness and practice. Ayua (2021) demonstrated that teacherlearner improvisation approach was recommended for teaching Basic Science at middle-basic education level, suggesting that Quality Assurance systems should support and encourage creative, participatory teaching and learning approaches involving both teachers and learners in the educational process.

6. BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This section addresses the benefit of the model, its implication challenges and the way forward.

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6.1 Benefits of the SCT-QA Model

The SCT-QA Model implementation would generate multiple benefits for rural Basic education in Nigeria. Early problem detection would enable prompt intervention before issues escalate. Teacher absenteeism, for example, would be identified quickly through community monitoring and technology-enabled reporting, enabling SUBEB to take corrective action. This contrasts with the current situation where absenteeism may continue for months before detection. Improved teacher attendance and performance would result from increased accountability. When teachers know their attendance and performance are being monitored by both communities and education authorities, they are more likely to be present and engaged, improving learning outcomes and strengthening community trust. Better UBEC fund utilization would be facilitated by improved data on school needs and performance. Resources could be allocated to schools needing them most, and intervention impacts could be tracked over time, ensuring limited resources are used effectively. Increased community school ownership would be fostered by active community involvement in Quality Assurance processes. When communities are empowered to monitor and support their schools, they are more likely to invest in education, advocate for quality improvements, and ensure their children attend regularly, contributing to improved learner retention. Improved learner retention would result from better quality instruction, increased community engagement, and strengthened accountability. When children are learning and communities are invested in education, children are more likely to stay in school and complete their Basic education. Ayua (2021) demonstrated that teacher-learner improvisation approach was recommended for teaching Basic Science at middle-basic education level, suggesting that Quality Assurance systems should support and encourage creative, participatory teaching and learning approaches. The SCT-QA Model, by involving communities and using technology to support monitoring and feedback, creates conditions fostering such creative approaches.

6.2 Challenges to Implementation

The SCT-QA Model faces significant challenges requiring address for successful implementation. Digital literacy and technology access are major concerns. Many community members, particularly in rural areas, lack digital skills needed to use mobile applications or engage with technology-enabled systems, requiring investment in digital literacy training and use of technologies accessible to users with varying digital literacy levels. Infrastructure limitations, including poor network connectivity and lack of electricity, pose significant barriers in many rural areas, requiring address through telecommunications infrastructure investment, offline-capable technology use, and development of technologies working with limited connectivity. Funding constraints affect every aspect of the SCT-QA Model, from technology development and deployment to training and capacity building, requiring sustainable funding mechanisms including government budget allocations, development partner support, and community contributions. Community capacity is another significant challenge. Many SBMC members lack knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively monitor school performance, requiring investment in training, mentorship, and ongoing support to build community capacity over time. Data privacy and security concerns must be addressed to protect teachers', learners', and community members' privacy, requiring clear policies and protocols for data collection, storage, use, and sharing. Ayua (2011) found that science teachers in middle-basic schools were quite aware of teacher-based improvisation yet their improvisation level was low because they lacked basic practical skills and encouragement to improvise. Similarly, for technology integration in Quality Assurance, awareness without capacity building and support will be insufficient.

6.3 Strategies for Successful Implementation

To overcome these challenges, a phased implementation approach is recommended. The model should be piloted in a limited number of local government areas, with lessons learned used to refine and improve the

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model before scaling. This phased approach would reduce risk, enable adaptive learning, and ensure implementation challenges are identified and addressed early. Partnerships with telecommunications companies and the Nigerian Communications Commission would be essential for addressing network connectivity challenges, facilitating network coverage expansion to rural areas and developing affordable, accessible technology solutions. Comprehensive training of SBMC members, teachers, and Quality Assurance officers is essential, covering not only technical skills but also understanding of the Quality Assurance framework, roles and responsibilities, and community participation importance. Training should be ongoing with refresher sessions and continuous learning opportunities. Integration of the SCT-QA Model with existing EMIS systems would ensure consistency, reduce duplication, and leverage existing investments in educational data systems, requiring close collaboration between SUBEB and technology partners to ensure seamless data flow between systems. Community engagement strategies must be culturally appropriate, sensitive to local contexts, and inclusive of diverse voices, requiring understanding local dynamics, building trust, and ensuring marginalized groups are included in Quality Assurance processes. Government commitment at all levels—federal, state, and local—is essential for sustainable implementation, reflected in budget allocations, policy frameworks, and institutional support structures. Ayua (2012a) recommended that stakeholders in education should improve teacher education programmes to serve primary school task requirements in terms of ensuring balance in course contents, acquisition of basic practical skills for improvisation, and boosting production of teachers who can teach Primary Science effectively using activity-based methods. Similarly, the SCT-QA Model implementation requires strengthening teacher preparation and professional development systems.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE PAPER

This section addresses the relevance of the paper, pointing out policy, practical and research relevance.

7.1 Policy Implications

The SCT-QA Model has significant implications for education policy at federal and state levels. First, UBEC should revise its quality assurance guidelines to incorporate community participation and technology as key Quality Assurance pillars. Existing Quality Assurance frameworks focus primarily on SUBEB-led oversight; these frameworks must be expanded to recognize communities' and technology's roles in ensuring quality. Second, UBEC and state governments should prioritize investment in rural connectivity to enable technology-enabled Quality Assurance systems. Without reliable internet and mobile connectivity, many technology components of the SCT-QA Model would not be feasible. Government investment in telecommunications infrastructure is essential. Third, policy frameworks should require SBMC training and capacity building and establish minimum standards for SBMC functionality. SBMCs must be properly constituted, regularly meeting, and actively engaged in Quality Assurance processes for the model to succeed. Fourth, resource allocation decisions should be informed by Quality Assurance data, ensuring schools facing greatest challenges receive needed support, requiring strengthening the link between Quality Assurance data and planning and budgeting processes. Ayua (2012b) discussed continuous assessment implications in Nigeria's education system, highlighting systematic data collection importance for improved educational outcomes. This principle extends to Quality Assurance policy: systematic data collection and use must be prioritized in policy frameworks.

7.2 Practice Implications

At the institutional level, SUBEB should establish dedicated "Rural Quality Assurance Units" with specific responsibility for rural schools. These units would coordinate Quality Assurance activities in rural areas, provide support to LGEA Quality Assurance officers, and ensure rural schools' specific challenges are addressed. Capacity building for LGEA Quality Assurance officers, Head Teachers, and SBMC members

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is essential. Training programs should cover technology-enabled monitoring, community engagement, data analysis, and school improvement planning. SBMC members should receive orientation on their roles and responsibilities, training in monitoring techniques and data collection, and support in using technology tools for Quality Assurance. Ongoing mentorship and supervision would strengthen SBMC capacity over time. School-level systems should be established for collecting and managing Quality Assurance data, including maintaining accurate school records and using data for school improvement planning. Ayua (2019) demonstrated that creative teaching involves teaching creatively and teaching for creativity, which work hand in hand to enhance learning outcomes. This has implications for Quality Assurance practice: Quality Assurance systems should not only monitor but also encourage and support creative teaching practices fostering curiosity, autonomy, and originality in learners.

7.3 Research Implications

The SCT-QA Model is a conceptual framework requiring empirical validation. Research should be conducted to pilot the model in selected LGAs and evaluate its impact on educational quality, including learning outcomes, teacher attendance, and learner retention. Research should also examine implementation processes, barriers, and facilitators to inform successful scaling and adaptation. Comparative research across states and LGAs could identify contextual factors affecting the model's effectiveness and inform context-specific implementation strategies. Research should also examine issues such as digital literacy, technology adoption, and community engagement from diverse stakeholder perspectives, ensuring marginalized voices are included. Longitudinal research could track the SCT-QA Model's long-term impacts on educational quality and outcomes, providing evidence of sustained effectiveness. Research should also investigate the model's cost-effectiveness compared to alternative Quality Assurance approaches. Terhemba et al. (2022) found that creative teaching enhances critical thinking among students, supporting creative pedagogy inclusion in Quality Assurance frameworks. Research should examine how Quality Assurance systems supporting creative teaching can contribute to higher-order thinking skills development essential for 21st-century learning.

8. CONCLUSION

Quality cannot be assured from Makurdi or Abuja alone. The persistent quality deficits in

Nigerian rural Basic schools demonstrate that current centralized, periodic, and paper-based Quality Assurance mechanisms are inadequate for the task. Strengthening Quality Assurance in rural Basic schools requires a fundamental reconceptualization of how quality is monitored and assured. It requires decentralizing responsibility to communities and equipping both SUBEB and communities with technology tools needed to monitor quality in real-time. The SCT-QA Model proposed in this paper offers a practical pathway for achieving this vision. By integrating SUBEB institutional oversight, community engagement through SBMCs and PTAs, and technology's realtime data capabilities, the model creates a more responsive, accountable, and sustainable Quality Assurance system. The model is grounded in TQM and PM&E theoretical principles, emphasizing shared responsibility, continuous improvement, and community empowerment.

The SCT-QA Model implementation faces significant challenges, including digital literacy, infrastructure limitations, funding constraints, and community capacity. However, these challenges can be addressed through phased rollout, strategic partnerships, comprehensive training, and sustained government commitment. The model's benefits—early problem detection, improved teacher attendance, better resource utilization, increased community ownership, and improved learner retention—make it a worthwhile investment for the Nigerian Basic education sector. Ayua's (2019) call for creative teaching fostering curiosity, connection making, autonomy, ownership, and originality in learners is particularly relevant for

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Quality Assurance systems in rural schools. Such systems should not only ensure compliance but also nurture creative and critical thinking skills essential for 21st-century learning and entrepreneurship. As Ayua and Eriba (2015) demonstrated, teachers' creative behaviours positively influence entrepreneurial skills development among pupils, suggesting that Quality Assurance systems supporting creative teaching can contribute to broader economic development and self-reliance goals.

Furthermore, Ayua's (2021) work on teacher-learner improvisation demonstrates that involving learners in the educational process enhances performance and engagement. This principle should extend to Quality Assurance systems, where communities and learners should be active participants rather than passive subjects of monitoring and evaluation. Ultimately, the SCT-QA Model contributes to the broader goal of achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all Nigerian children, as envisioned in the UBE Act and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. By ensuring rural children receive quality instruction and have the opportunity to learn and thrive, the model helps break the cycle of poverty and inequality perpetuating poor educational outcomes in rural communities. The time to act is now: the children in Nigeria's rural Basic schools deserve nothing less than a quality education preparing them for a better future. As the Yoruba proverb reminds us, "Bí a kò bá kọ́ ọmọ ní ṣíṣe, yóò kọ́ ẹ̀kọ́ àṣejù" (If a child is not taught, they will learn mischief). Nigeria's future depends on our collective commitment to ensuring every child, regardless of where they live, receives a quality basic education. Strengthening Quality Assurance mechanisms through the integrated approach proposed in this paper is a critical step toward achieving this goal.

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