

CHALLENGES FACING NINE YEARS BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN KAYONZA DISTRICT, RWANDA

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Abstract: The study was on challenges facing the nine years basic education schools on students' performance in Kayonza district, Rwanda. The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample size of the population included 1 DEO, 3 SEO, 8 Headteachers, 8 PTAs, 32 teachers, and 47 students. The study indicated that the schools of 9YBE program in Kayonza district lacked enough facilities such as textbooks and computers to support the teaching and learning activities and this affected the performance of those schools. Data were collected using instruments like questionnaires, observation checklist and interviews. Data were described and presented using tables and analysed using percentages in drawing conclusions and recommendations. The study found that the role of parents in the process of teaching and learning in nine years basic education was insufficient. The big number of the students came to school without the needed material like pens, notebooks and mathematical sets. The study also found that, it was not easy for both students and their teachers to get to school. The study found that though all 9YBE students did not pay all school fees charged. However, additional fees like extra-classes fees, teachers' bonus and fire wood fees were charged. The study also found that teachers were not satisfied with their salaries, had no conducive environment and consequently students lacked love from their teachers. It was recommended that teachers need to manage the increase in number of students in schools under 9YBE. They need to exercise love and enjoy the teaching of students, helping them develop interests and skills in their interests' areas.

Keywords: students, basic education, textbooks, computers, teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Definition of key concepts:

- **Concept of academic performance**

Academic performance refers to a successful accomplishment or performance in a particular subject area and is indicated by grades, marks and scores of descriptive commentaries. Academic performance also refers to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers in a fixed time or academic year. Furthermore, academic performance is a performance on task with measures including comprehension, quality and accuracy of answers of tests, quality and accuracy of problem solving, frequency and quantity of desired outcome, time or rate to solution, time on task, level reasoning and critical thinking, creativity, recall and retention, and transfer of tasks.

- **Low academic performance:**

This refers to a situation in which the pupil performs below his or her potential in both class tests and subsequent national exams resulting in low levels of knowledge acquisition that fall short of what is required to successfully complete any level of education in the country. The concept is interchangeable with poor academic performance in this study.

- **Textbook:**

A textbook is a printed and bound artifact for each year or course of study. It contains facts and ideas around a certain subject. Textbooks are not like other books. Today, textbooks are assembled more than they are written. They are not usually written by a single author, nor are they a creative and imaginative endeavor. They are, in fact, usually specially made by a corporation to follow a set standard curriculum for a school system or larger .

- **Nine years basic education in Rwanda:**

Nine Year-Basic Education program In Rwanda is a government program where by all learners do compulsory primary level (6 years) plus lower secondary level (ordinary level) for free. It is aimed at enabling every Rwandan child to attain lower secondary education in order to prevent a high rate of primary drop-out.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Before 2009, the number of students in secondary level was limited and many of Primary Level Completers became street children, girls were early married and this led to population growth, unemployment, theft, sufferance from child labor working in tea plantations while others who were poor and weak dropped out of school because there was no interest in studying. Therefore the policy of introducing Nine Years Basic Education by adding three years of lower secondary to Primary Level schools came as an answer to such problems encountered by pupils who were in primary schools.

However, there are still challenges in implementing the policy of Nine Years Basic Education. From the beginning, there were no adequate infrastructure to accommodate all the students. Primary schools resorted to double shifting in order to accommodate the secondary level students. The classrooms became overcrowded due to large numbers of students.

The school infrastructure provided in the school of Nine Years Basic Education is to be assessed to identify their influence on that program. However, in Kayonza district as a poor and remote area, this problem of the school infrastructure appears as big challenge to the schools which are preparing students to compete with students from other districts with good facilities. Thus, warranting for an investigation of the challenges facing nine years basic education on students' performance in Kayonza district.

3. CHALLENGES OF NINE YEARS BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Challenges of Nine Years Basic Education Program in African countries:

African countries which inaugurated nine years basic education or twelve years basic education are facing various problems. It is the aim of Basic Education African Program (BEAP) to provide clear guidance and ongoing support to countries wishing to move into this direction, adapting such support to already ongoing work in countries themselves. Specifically, the Basic Education African Program (BEAP) assists in improving the existing curriculum, covering a longer cycle and a wider range of learning outcomes; develop meaningful articulation between basic education and the world of work, as well as further education and training; supplementing in-country human resources, by providing technical assistance and capacity development; reviewing supplementary components of basic education, such as diversification of provisions of school models so as to enhance inclusive participation in education; and encourage sharing of expertise and south-south cooperation.

Countries that have run the 9YBE have different challenges that are added to the increase of Africa-wide concerns about the inability of education systems inherited from the colonial powers to meet the serious challenges that have emerged from rapid socio-economic changes on the continent. This increased poverty, inequalities, global competition, migration and conflict have demonstrated the need for education to become much more inclusive, more responsive, more directly related to individual needs and circumstances, as well as the current expectations and demands of society and economy.

The expansion of the education programme provides the challenge of comprehensive curriculum reform so as to align curriculum structure, content, pedagogy and assessment to the re-defined objectives to suit with the changing profile of learners. The emphasis would lie on the achievement of a range of relevant learning outcomes that prepared all learners for life, for citizenship, for work and for continued learning, regardless of mode of provision.

Challenges of Nine Years Basic Education Program in Rwanda:

Nine years being a national policy of providing free education to both primary and ordinary level secondary schools in Rwanda, started in January 2009 with the senior one intake. The program has in some schools an extension of 12 years basic education since 2012 aiming at Universal Secondary Education.

Focusing on the possible challenges faced by Nine Years Basic Education program in Rwanda, Kalisa, (2011) observed that many government aided schools especially in rural areas lack qualified teachers. There is influx of students in schools and this would increase as the program progresses. The number of students in class would swell, jeopardizing the teaching and the learning process.

A number of secondary school in Rwanda lacked the basic scholastic materials like textbooks, teaching aids. The government delays to release the funds and capitation grants to government schools and those private schools in partnership with government to implement the program are managed in crisis. Students-teacher ratio is alarmingly high. This impacts heavily on the management of discipline and affective learning. Corruption in education sector is another challenge where Ministry officials and headteachers usually connive in creating ghost teachers and students.

Despite the program being free; some students remain at home for no serious reasons. Some have parents who hardly pay school uniforms, buy books and few smaller requirements that the schools demanded. Others at large find no value in education because even those who complete have failed to get meaningful employment in the government and private sectors. The program demands that there is an automatic promotion from one class to another. This is deadly in terms of quality and national educational standards (Kalisa, 2011).

Lack of funds is another problem. The Government relies heavily on the support from the donor's community such as the World Bank and the European Union. In case, the donors pull down, the program would fail. Government inspectorate has not played its role as well. There's irregular inspection Of Nine Years Basic Education, vital for the success of the program. Teachers are poorly paid and this has a bearing on service delivery.

Government banned punishments on students. This is very much respected in government schools and this affected by behaviors and their performances. Opposition politicians working in and out the country have politicized the program and seem not to see anything good with Nine Years Basic Education program and this has hampered its progress and implementation in Rwandan schools.

Distance to and from schools is also another challenges of these 9 YBE students. In rural areas 9YBE schools are located in distant places therefore students can be seen dozing in classes and sometimes when it rains, they are late, absent, wearing wet uniforms or shivering in classes which, in long turn, leads to early school drop outs. In some cases even the same occurs in urban areas and consequently it affects their performance in classes.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study was across sectional survey design where out of total population of 132, a population sample of 99 people was selected, using stratified and random sampling techniques, and it included 1 DEO, 3 SEO, 8 Headteachers, 8 PTAs, 32 teachers, and 47 students. Data were collected using observation, questionnaires and interviews. This study was conducted in educational context and this gave detailed information about the provision of teaching and learning materials like textbooks, computers and infrastructures.

5. FINDINGS

DATA PRESENTATION:

VIEWES OF STUDENTS RESPONSES ON THE CHALLENGES FACED IN THE LEARNING PROCESS:

Various challenges that hinder the teaching and learning situations

Item of the study / Statements	Students responses			
	SA	A	D	SD
Your parents give you enough teaching and learning materials	17% 8	21.7% 10	29% 14	32.3% 15
The distance from your home facilitates you in learning	13.6% 6	24.6% 12	35.9% 17	26.2% 12
The fees you pay at school affect your learning abilities	19.4% 9	25.7% 12	42.1% 20	10.8% 6
Your teachers do all possible ways to increase your knowledge and skills.	26% 12	24.8% 12	21.4% 10	27.8% 13

As shown in the table, the parents do not give enough materials to their children, 17% of students strongly agreed that the parents give materials that help them to study well such as notebooks, books, pens, mathematical sets, uniforms while 21.7% agreed, 29% disagreed and 19.2% strongly disagreed respectively.

These findings corroborate the ideas of PTAs and the SEOs during interview that the role of parents in the process of teaching and learning in nine years basic education is not sufficient. Parents do not provide scholastic materials to the children which facilitate them to learn well, for instance notebooks, textbooks pens and mathematical sets. This is due to lack of bookshops in the area and high prices of books which are not adapted to the low economic status of the area. There's big problem of the number of the students who come to school without materials. These students disturb the teachers and other students because they have nowhere to write notes and exercises. They could not study well and this led to low performance in schools. The study observed that the provision of scholastic materials by the parents is pertinent in any learning and teaching situation and on the students' performance.

As reflected in the table above, 13.6% of students strongly agreed that they easily get to school while 24.6% agreed, 35.9% disagreed and 26.2% strongly disagreed respectively that the distance to and from school facilitates the teaching and learning of students and teachers. This means that the majority of the students disagreed with the statements in question that it is easy to get to school. Most students come from areas of long mountains, make long distances to and from school. The distance varied from 3 to 8 kilometers by walking. Therefore punctuality and students attendance have a bearing on the performance in class and in final exams. The total of 62.1% disagreed with the statements that they have easy access to and from the school. It can be concluded that the majority of teachers had some difficulty in attendance and arrival which affected their academic performances at school.

Regarding the payments of school fees, 19.4% of students strongly agreed and 25.7% agreed while 42.1% disagreed and 10.8% strongly disagreed with the statements in question. The study observed that though all 9YBE students did not pay any school fees, there were other fees paid by the students. This information was supported by the PTAs who said that impromptu fees are charged to their children for instance for extra-classes, teachers' services and for buying fire wood fees. Poor students were asked to produce a poverty certificate issued by the Sector Executive Secretary. Some students failed to find these certificates and additional fees and consequently dropped out or did not attend classes during the fees recovery period.

On improving knowledge and skills, 26% of students strongly agreed, 24.8% agreed, 21.4% disagreed and 27.8% strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of students (51%) agreed that their teachers taught them properly while 48.1% denied it. In learning and teaching process when a number closer to the half of students in a given class do not appreciate their teachers, this situation elucidates how much both teachers and students are demotivated.

Therefore a student to study in conducive environment, there should be a love from his teacher and the latter should be an experienced person with mastery of the content, updated his content and understandable in order to interest all learners. As observed from all PTA's representatives, some teachers did not give homeworks to the learners, others were always absent and did not explain properly contents to students because they passed most of time copying notes on the blackboard. This justified, the reason why students of 9YBE failed in not only internal examination but also in external ones like in national examinations.

VIEWES OF TEACHERS ON THE CHALLENGES FACING NINE YEARS BASIC EDUCATION:

Challenges faced by nine years basic education schools.

Items of the study / statements	Teachers responses			
	SA	A	D	SD
The parents give enough teaching and learning materials	13.3% 4	19.4% 6	28.7% 9	38.6% 13
The distance from your home facilitates you in teaching and learning	12.1% 4	22.5% 7	33.8% 11	31.6% 10
Your salary and other incentives are enough and motivative in teaching	8% 3	11.1% 4	20.5% 7	60.4% 18
Your students are interested in to improve on their performances	13.5% 4	16.2% 5	30.7% 10	39.6% 13

As shown by the table above, teachers do not appreciate the role played by parents in providing enough teaching and learning materials to their children. Only 13.3% of the teachers agreed that the parents give enough teaching and learning materials to their children, and 19.4% agreed, 28.7% disagreed and 38.7% strongly disagreed with the statement. Therefore 32.7% agreed while 67.3% disagreed with the item on the study.

The study found out that parents did not prioritize the needs of teaching and learning materials. Such parents were advised on how to determine the order for dealing with a series of items or tasks according to their relative importance. Parents did not provide all necessary students' materials. This information was confirmed by the SEOs, the PTAs and the Headmasters during the researcher's interviews with them.

The study also noted that few parents buy such materials and others lack where to buy these school materials, as the environment is rural and inhabited by poor people. This implies that the parents do not have money to pay the school materials for their children like textbooks, notebooks, pens and uniforms.

On the distance to and from schools, 12.1% of the teachers strongly agreed that the distance from their home to their school is short and easy while 22.5% agreed, 33.8% disagreed and 31.6% strongly disagreed with the statement. Teachers with short and easy means get time to prepare or organize their contents for teaching in their schools.

Through the observation and interviews with the SEOs and the DEO, it was found out that many schools are at the tops of hills and getting there makes one very tired. This demotivates teachers to bring their teaching aids a long the way to school. These areas do not possess the good roads to facilitate the transport of teaching materials up to their classrooms.

On the salaries and wages, other incentives and fringe benefits, only 19.1% of the teachers agreed that they are satisfied with the salary they get and other incentives, while 20.5% and 60.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement in question. The study found out that the teachers get insufficient incomes from their salary. In the interview with headteachers, they said that the salary of a teacher is too low. The school managers are not allowed to ask for more money from students in order to increase the teachers' salary or give them other supports like bonus, accommodation, medical and transport fees. This led to the low motivation of teachers when doing their work. Low motivation of teachers has a direct bearing on teaching and performance of students. Demotivated teachers lack morale, absent themselves, arrive late for work which affects the general performance.

Besides, students are not interested in learning and this affects their performance. This has been confirmed by 70.1% of our respondents of whom 30.7% and 39.6% disagreed and strongly disagreed that students are interested in learning while 29.9% agreed that students play an active role in their learning.

It's not surprising because even in the interviews including all the DEO, the SEOs and Headteachers, it was observed that students' absenteeism, notes takings, not revising the given notes and reading the available books are the main challenges at their disposal. It was observed that students' reluctance and carelessness at school and in class had a direct bearing on their performance in all exams. Therefore students' punctuality attendance and availability of notebooks, textbooks and other scholastic materials are sorely responsible for the students' performance in class and in national examinations.

6. DATA ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Investigation on how challenges facing nine years basic education affected students' performance in Kayonza District:

On this objective, the findings revealed that the 9YBE students faced a lot of challenges. The study found that the role of parents in the process of teaching and learning in nine years basic education was insufficient. The parents didn't prioritize the needs of teaching and learning materials. Students lacked all necessary materials, had no access to commercial centres where they could buy these materials since these schools lacked canteens and kiosks. The study found out that other parents had no money to buy the school materials for their children like textbooks, notebooks, pens and school uniforms and this affected their behaviours and their performances in class and final exams as well.

The study found that the big number of the students came to school without the needed material like pens, notebooks and mathematical sets. The absence of these scholastic materials affected their studies in class and this had a direct bearing on their performances in all exams and in participating in school activities.

The study also found that, it was not easy for both students and their teachers to get to school. Most students and teachers make long distances from their home to school. Long distances affected the teachers performance at school in preparing lesson notes, schemes of work, teaching aids while the students, missed most of the morning lessons, absent themselves which all affected overall performances at school.

The study found that though all 9YBE students did not pay all school fees charged. However, additional fees like extra-classes fees, teachers' bonus and fire wood fees were charged. Poor students who lacked poverty certificates issued by the Sector Executive Secretary were sent out of classes and this affected their attendance levels and performance in all exams.

The study also found that teachers were not satisfied with their salaries, had no conducive environment and consequently students lacked love from their teachers. Some teachers did not give homeworks to the learners, others were absent, others could not explain properly the subjects' contents too. This justified the reason why students of 9YBE failed not only in internal examinations but also in external ones.

The study observed that most students were always absent from schools, lacked notes for revising, notes taking and the available books necessary at their disposal. The students cultures were sorely responsible for poor or low performance found in 9 YBE schools.

The study observed that lack of parental involvement in education, the long distance to and from the school, lack of teachers' motivation due to low salary, lack of students' interest in learning and high levels of absenteeism affected their performance in Kayonza District.

Conclusions:

On the challenges faced, the study also concluded that most schools, parents and administrators were solely responsible for the progress and students' performance. Therefore lack of parental involvement in education, lack of teachers' motivation due to low salary, students' interest in learning and absenteeism greatly contributed to poor performance of students and teachers in all schools.

Recommendations:

It was recommended that teachers need to manage the increase in number of students in schools under 9YBE. They need to exercise love and enjoy the teaching of students, helping them develop interests and skills in their interests' areas. More lesson plans and syllabi within a framework of the given curriculum are pertinent in spearheading the performance of students and teachers in all schools.

Students were advised to put into practice what the teachers taught them and make more research to increase on their knowledge. They need to always do their home works without protests, ask reasonable questions, execute tasks given by their teachers and always be active in and outside classes.

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