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Influence of School General Assembly Practices on Pupils' Academic Achievement in Public Primary Schools in Gasabo District, Rwanda

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Abstract: **This study examined the relationship between school general assembly practices and pupils' academic achievement in public primary schools in Gasabo District, Rwanda. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to assess the level of school general assembly practices; to assess the level of pupils' academic achievement; and to determine the relationship and predictive contribution of school general assembly practices to pupils' academic achievement. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative data from structured teacher questionnaires with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with head teachers. The study involved 203 respondents, comprising 193 teachers and 10 head teachers, drawn from a target population of 412 teachers and head teachers in 21 public primary schools in Gasabo District. Descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation and simple linear regression were used for quantitative analysis, while interview data were analyzed thematically. The results indicated that school general assembly practices were rated positively (Grand Mean = 4.12), as were indicators of pupils' academic achievement (Grand Mean = 4.08). A strong positive association was observed between school general assembly practices and pupils' academic achievement ($r = .721$, $p < .001$, $N = 203$). Simple linear regression showed that the assembly-practices measure explained 52.0% of the observed variance in academic achievement ($R^2 = .520$; $\beta = .721$, $p < .001$). Because the study used a non-experimental design, these findings are interpreted as evidence of association and predictive contribution rather than proof of causation. The study recommends that school leaders strengthen purposeful assemblies through academic communication, learner participation, constructive motivation, discipline reinforcement, feedback and stakeholder engagement, while future research should use longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs to examine causal pathways.**

Keywords: **General Assembly, Practices, Pupils, Academic Achievement, Public Primary Schools, Rwanda.**

1. INTRODUCTION

School governance and leadership are increasingly recognized as important determinants of educational quality, learner engagement, and institutional effectiveness. Contemporary educational research suggests that high-performing schools depend not only on adequate physical and financial resources but also on leadership practices that promote participation, transparency, accountability, and shared responsibility among key stakeholders. Inclusive leadership approaches provide opportunities for learners, teachers, parents, and school administrators to participate in decisions that shape the school environment and support teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2021; OECD, 2021). International evidence further indicates that effective school leadership is associated with improved learner outcomes, particularly when leadership establishes clear academic expectations, supports teachers, promotes collaboration, and maintains a strong focus on learning (Leithwood et

al., 2020). UNESCO (2021) similarly emphasizes the importance of effective communication, learner engagement, supportive relationships, and positive school environments in promoting motivation, discipline, and academic engagement.

Within this framework, school general assemblies constitute a practical school-level platform through which participatory governance and communication can be operationalized. They provide opportunities for school leaders to communicate academic expectations, review school performance, reinforce rules and values, address emerging challenges, recognize achievements, and mobilize stakeholders around shared educational objectives. When purposefully planned and effectively implemented, assemblies may contribute to a supportive school environment by strengthening communication, accountability, learner motivation, discipline, and school climate, thereby potentially supporting academic achievement.

The relevance of effective school governance is particularly evident in Sub-Saharan Africa, where expanded access to education has not always been accompanied by corresponding improvements in learning outcomes. The World Bank (2022) reported that approximately 70% of children in the region experience learning poverty, while UNESCO (2022) identified persistent challenges related to foundational learning, school dropout, and completion rates. These challenges have increased attention to school-level factors such as leadership, accountability, learner participation, teacher support, and the quality of the learning environment. Evidence from the African Development Bank (2021) also highlights the importance of community participation and effective school management in strengthening educational outcomes.

Participatory mechanisms such as school general assemblies can provide structured opportunities for school leaders, teachers, and learners to communicate, reflect on school performance, reinforce academic expectations, and address behavioural and learning-related challenges. However, their potential contribution to academic achievement is likely to depend on how they are organized, the issues addressed, the level of stakeholder participation, and whether decisions and messages communicated during assemblies are followed by appropriate action. Thus, assemblies should not be viewed simply as routine administrative gatherings but as potential governance and learning-support mechanisms whose effectiveness requires empirical examination.

In Rwanda, substantial progress has been made in expanding access to education and strengthening school management. The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2021) reported a primary school net enrolment rate exceeding 98%, while the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018/19–2023/24 emphasized decentralization, accountability, community participation, and improved education quality. Rwanda has also implemented a Competence-Based Curriculum designed to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and other competencies, thereby requiring learning environments that promote active participation, constructive interaction, responsibility, and continuous communication. School general assemblies may provide an institutional platform for reinforcing these expectations by communicating academic priorities, promoting positive behaviour, recognizing learner achievement, and encouraging collective responsibility for learning. Nevertheless, improved access and policy reforms have not eliminated concerns about learning outcomes. Rwanda Education Board (REB, 2022) reports indicate that some learners continue to experience difficulties in achieving expected competency levels, particularly in core subjects such as English and Mathematics. These concerns are relevant to Gasabo District, one of Rwanda's highly urbanized districts, where variations in academic performance remain a concern despite relatively strong infrastructure and access to educational opportunities. The reported 2024–2025 examination results indicate a pass rate of 47.1%, with 4,815 out of 7,511 candidates reportedly failing to meet minimum competency requirements. These figures, if confirmed by official records, point to the need for closer examination of school-level factors that may be associated with learner achievement.

The reported academic performance challenges raise questions regarding the effectiveness of school governance practices, including school general assemblies. Although assemblies are conducted in public primary schools, their implementation may vary considerably, with some serving primarily administrative purposes while others may be deliberately used to communicate academic expectations, discuss learning challenges, reinforce discipline, recognize achievement, and mobilize learners and teachers towards improved performance.

The relationship between assembly practices and academic achievement may also be influenced by learner motivation, discipline and behaviour, and school climate, as well as contextual factors such as teacher experience, instructional resources, class size, and learners' socioeconomic circumstances. Existing research on education in Rwanda has largely emphasized broader issues of school leadership, governance, policy implementation, instructional leadership, and

community participation, with comparatively limited empirical attention to specific participatory mechanisms such as school general assemblies and their relationship with pupils' academic achievement.

This creates an important empirical gap, particularly regarding how assemblies are structured, the extent of stakeholder participation, the issues addressed, and the mechanisms through which they may influence learning-related behaviours and outcomes. Therefore, given the persistent challenges in learning outcomes, the reported academic performance concerns in Gasabo District, and the limited empirical evidence on school general assemblies, this study examines the influence of school general assembly practices on pupils' academic achievement in public primary schools in Gasabo District, Rwanda. The study is expected to generate evidence that can inform school leadership practices, strengthen participatory governance, and contribute to efforts to improve the quality of primary education.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

The study employed a descriptive survey and correlational research design within the quantitative strand of the mixed-methods approach.

2.2 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Gasabo District, one of the three districts of Kigali City, Rwanda. Gasabo District was selected because it has a relatively large number of public primary schools and exhibits variations in pupils' academic performance, making it an appropriate setting for examining the influence of school general assembly practices on pupils' academic achievement.

2.3 Target population

The target population for this study comprised 412 respondents drawn from 21 public primary schools in Gasabo District, including 391 teachers and 21 head teachers.

2.4 Sample Size Determination

The target population comprised 412 respondents, including 391 teachers and 21 head teachers from 21 public primary schools. The sample size was determined using Yamane's simplified formula at a 5% margin of error:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = total target population

e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{412}{1 + 412(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{412}{1 + 1.03} = \frac{412}{2.03} = 202.95$$

Therefore, the required sample size was 203 respondents.

2.5 Research Instruments

The study used two primary data-collection instruments: a structured teacher questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide for head teachers.

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3. RESULTS

3.1 Gender of Respondents

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	112	55.2
Female	91	44.8
Total	203	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Male respondents constituted 55.2% (112) and female respondents 44.8% (91). Both categories were represented in the sample. The distribution provides respondent diversity for interpreting perceptions of school general assembly practices.

3.2 Findings

3.2.1 Level of School General Assembly Practices

This section presents the findings on the level of school general assembly practices in public primary schools in Gasabo District. It focuses on respondents' assessments of the implementation and effectiveness of general assemblies in relation to communication, learner guidance, discipline, motivation, participation, and other school-support functions**.**

Table 2: School General Assembly Practices

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
School general assemblies are effectively implemented	4.20	.75
Daily coaching is regularly conducted	4.08	.72
Advisory practices are promoted	4.10	.70
Assemblies encourage resource mobilization	4.11	.74
Teachers motivate pupils during assemblies	4.16	.68
Community learning is promoted	4.07	.73
Peer learning is encouraged	4.12	.76
Grand Mean	4.12	0.73

Source: Field Data (2026)

The overall mean score of 2 indicates that respondents agreed that school general assembly practices were effectively implemented in public primary schools. The highest-rated aspect was effective implementation of assemblies (M = 4.20), while community learning recorded the lowest mean score (M = 4.07).

The first objective assessed the level of school general assembly practices using seven measured indicators. The Grand Mean was 4.12 (SD = 0.73), indicating generally positive respondent perceptions. Effective implementation of assemblies recorded the highest mean (M = 4.20, SD = 0.75), while community learning recorded the lowest mean (M = 4.07, SD = 0.73). The results suggest that respondents generally viewed the measured assembly practices as well implemented.

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The head-teacher interviews complemented these findings by describing assemblies as opportunities for communication of school objectives, guidance and counselling, discipline management and learner motivation. These qualitative accounts provide contextual explanation of the quantitative ratings but do not constitute an independent causal test.

3.2.2 Level of Pupils' Academic Achievement

Indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation
Improved examination scores	4.05	.69
Improved literacy skills	4.12	.66
Increased classroom participation	4.09	.70
Reduced dropout rates	4.01	.72
Improved innovation and creativity	4.08	.68
Effective school planning	4.13	.69
Grand Mean	4.08	0.69

Source: Field Data (2026)

The second objective assessed pupils' academic achievement using the study's measured indicators. The results showed a generally positive assessment, with a grand mean of 4.08 (SD **= 0.69)**. Effective school planning recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.13**),** while reduced dropout rates had the lowest (M = 4.01**).** Overall, respondents reported positive perceptions of pupils' examination performance, literacy skills, classroom participation, retention, innovation and creativity, and learning-support planning. As these measures were perception-based, the findings represent respondents' assessments rather than independently verified academic or administrative records. Head teachers' interviews reinforced these findings, indicating that regular and well-organised assemblies were perceived to contribute to improved discipline, punctuality, attendance, and pupils' commitment to learning.

3.2.3: Relationship and Predictive Contribution of School General Assembly Practices

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	School General Assembly Practices	Academic Achievement
School General Assembly Practices	1	.721**
Academic Achievement	.721**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N		203

Correlation significant at 0.01 level

Source: Field Data (2026)

The results reveal a strong positive relationship between school general assembly practices and pupils' academic achievement (r =.721, p =.000).

Pearson correlation produced a strong positive association between school general assembly practices and pupils' academic achievement ($r = .721$, $p < .001$, $N = 203$). The null hypothesis of no relationship was therefore rejected at the 5% significance level. The result indicates a statistically significant positive association in the study sample; it does not by itself establish causation.

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3.2.4 Influence of School General Assembly Practices on Pupils' Academic Achievement

Table 4: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
.721	.520	.518	.613

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings indicate that school general assembly practices explain 52.0% of the variation in pupils' academic achievement.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first objective examined the level of school general assembly practices in public primary schools in Gasabo District. The findings revealed generally positive perceptions of assembly practices, with a grand mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.73**)**. Effective implementation received the highest rating **(**M = 4.20**),** while community learning recorded the lowest, although still positive, rating **(**M = 4.07**).** These results suggest that general assemblies were perceived as regularly implemented and as serving multiple school-level functions, including communication of school objectives, learner guidance, discipline management, motivation, and opportunities for peer and community learning. Head teachers' accounts further indicated that assemblies were deliberately used to communicate expectations, provide guidance and counselling, reinforce discipline, and motivate learners.

The findings are consistent with the broader literature on learning-focused educational leadership. UNESCO (2024) identifies setting clear expectations, maintaining a focus on learning, developing people, and fostering collaboration as important dimensions of effective educational leadership. Similarly, Hallinger and Heck (2021) argue that the influence of school leadership on learning is largely mediated through organisational conditions, professional practices, and interactions among school actors rather than through isolated administrative actions. In this context, the relatively high ratings for communication, motivation, advisory practices, and peer learning suggest that general assemblies may constitute a practical school-level platform through which leadership and learner-support functions are enacted. However, because the measures were based on respondents' perceptions, the findings reflect reported practice rather than an independent assessment of assembly quality or frequency.

The second objective assessed pupils' academic achievement using the study's measured indicators. The findings indicated generally positive perceptions, with a grand mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.69)**.** Effective school planning recorded the highest rating **(**M = 4.13), whereas reduced dropout rates recorded the lowest **(**M = 4.01**).** Overall, respondents reported favourable assessments of examination performance, literacy skills, classroom participation, retention, innovation and creativity, and learning-support planning. Head teachers' interviews further associated regular assembly programmes with improved discipline, punctuality, attendance, and commitment to learning. These findings are broadly compatible with OECD (2023), which highlights supportive relationships, positive disciplinary climates, attendance, and school-level support as important features of resilient learning environments. Nevertheless, the academic-achievement measures in the present study were perception-based and should therefore not be interpreted as independently verified examination results, attendance records, or dropout statistics.

The qualitative findings also provide a useful interpretive dimension to the quantitative results. Head teachers described assemblies as spaces where learners receive guidance, school expectations are reinforced, positive behaviour is encouraged, and academic effort is recognised. From a Social Constructivist perspective, such interactions may support learning by creating opportunities for communication, participation, peer interaction, and shared meaning-making. The convergence between respondents' quantitative assessments and head teachers' qualitative accounts strengthens the contextual interpretation of the findings. However, this convergence does not, by itself, establish that general assembly's independently produced the reported academic outcomes.

The third objective examined the relationship between school general assembly practices and pupils' academic achievement. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant association between the two composite measures **(**r = .721, p < .001, N = 203**)**. Simple linear regression further showed that the assembly-practices measure accounted for 52.0% of the observed variance in the academic-achievement measure (**R^2 = .520**). The standardized

regression coefficient was β = .721 **(**t = 18.440, p < .001**),** while the regression equation was Y = 1.142 + 0.721X**.** Collectively, these results indicate a substantial positive statistical relationship and suggest that stronger reported assembly practices were associated with higher reported academic-achievement scores in the study sample.

The finding is consistent with contemporary evidence emphasising the importance of educational leadership, collaboration, supportive relationships, positive school climate, and learner engagement in promoting favourable learning conditions. UNESCO (2024) stresses the importance of learning-focused leadership, collaboration, and meaningful engagement, while OECD (2023) highlights supportive relationships, disciplinary climate, attendance, and stakeholder involvement as relevant characteristics of resilient educational environments. Hallinger and Heck (2021) similarly emphasise that leadership effects on learning operate through organisational and professional processes. The present study extends this broader literature by examining school general assemblies as a concrete school-level platform through which communication, expectations, motivation, discipline, guidance, and participation may be facilitated.

The strong correlation and significant regression results therefore provide empirical support for the study's proposition that school general assembly practices are positively associated with pupils' academic achievement in the sampled public primary schools in Gasabo District. The findings are also theoretically compatible with Social Constructivist Theory, particularly the view that meaningful interaction, participation, collaboration, and shared communication can support learning processes. However, the results should be interpreted within the methodological limitations of the study. Because the research employed a cross-sectional, non-experimental design and relied substantially on perception-based measures, the statistical relationship should not be interpreted as definitive evidence that general assembly's alone cause improvements in academic achievement. Other school, teacher, learner, family, and contextual factors may also contribute to the observed outcomes. The principal contribution of the study is therefore context-specific evidence that stronger school general assembly practices are significantly associated with better reported academic achievement in public primary schools in Gasabo District.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that school general assembly practices have a significant positive influence on pupils' academic achievement in the sampled public primary schools in Gasabo District, Rwanda. General assemblies were generally perceived as effectively implemented and were found to provide important platforms for communication, learner guidance, discipline, motivation, and reinforcement of academic and behavioural expectations. These functions suggest that well-organised and purposeful assemblies can contribute meaningfully to a supportive school environment conducive to pupils' academic achievement.

The study established a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between school general assembly practices and pupils' academic achievement ((r = .721, p < .001)). The regression model further indicated that general assembly practices explained 52.0% of the variance in the academic-achievement measure ((R^2 = .520)). Overall, the findings provide empirical evidence that stronger implementation of school general assembly practices is associated with better academic achievement among pupils in the study setting. Nevertheless, because the study employed a cross-sectional, non-experimental design, the reported influence should be interpreted as statistical influence or predictive association rather than definitive causal effect**.**

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To School Administrators: School administrators should strengthen the planning and implementation of general assemblies by linking them to clear learning, learner-support, and school-improvement objectives. Assembly content should be purposeful, regular, well organised, and responsive to pupils' academic, behavioural, and developmental needs.

To Teachers: Teachers should use general assemblies to reinforce learning expectations, promote positive behaviour, provide appropriate guidance, and recognise pupils' academic efforts. They should also promote inclusive participation through pupil presentations, peer-learning activities, and leadership opportunities, while integrating these practices into broader classroom and school-improvement strategies.

To Gasabo District Education Authorities: The District Education Authorities should provide schools with practical guidance and professional development on effective assembly planning, learner participation, positive discipline, communication, and the use of school-level evidence to improve practice. Such support should promote collaborative and learning-focused school leadership.

To MINEDUC and the Rwanda Basic Education Board: MINEDUC and the Rwanda Basic Education Board should consider incorporating effective school assembly practices into broader school leadership and learner-support guidelines. Such guidance should emphasise purposeful communication, inclusive participation, positive discipline, stakeholder engagement, and appropriate monitoring while allowing schools flexibility to adapt assembly practices to their specific contexts.

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