

ASSESSMENT OF PARENTS' LITERACY AND
THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS AT
MUSANZE DISTRICT – RWANDA

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Abstract

The aim of this study was the assessment of parents' literacy and the academic performance of learners at Musanze District-Rwanda. The specific objectives were: to explore the strategies used by illiterate parents to help their learners to perform academically in Musanze district. To examine the strategies adopted by learners with illiterate parents to perform academically in Musanze District, to analyze the ways learners develop performance strategies to copy with the problem of illiterate parents. The population under this study consisted learners and parents. Totaling 10 potential respondents which took purposive sampling. The instrument of the study was structure interview questionnaire with recorder. Data were collected using recorder. The findings indicated that students with illiterate parents faces many challenges and they have even coping strategies of mitigating the challenges as indicated by respondents that parents who are illiterate helps their learners in terms of feeding them and paying a little amount of schools fees. The researcher used purposive sampling of five parents and five learners selected from Musanze District, the total number of respondents were ten individual six females and four males. The researchers recommend that the schools are encouraged to host events which enable parents to interact with the school on monthly basis such as consultation days, visiting days and sports day whereby parents are invited to cement the relationship between the school and the parents for the benefit of the child academically. There is need for increased sensitization of the public about parental literacy and its impact to the children's performance. Strengthening the bond between parents-children relationship through academic and social interaction should be paramount.

Keywords: literacy, illiteracy, parents, academic performance and strategy

In most developed countries like Finland, USA and Canada, parents 'involvement in the development of education have a positive impact on the students' academic performance (Miller-Grand Vaux & Yoder, 2002). In Finland, parents and other educational stakeholders contribute in their children's education by providing daily diet for children at school, participating in health services which are needed at school, as well as playing a role in guidance and psychological counselling and access to a broader array of mental health and other services for their students. Their participation reflects a great commitment to the well-being of all children (Finland, 2010. Gamerman (2008) indicated that in the United States of America education system is undergoing a systemic perceptual Change as a result of parents and community dissatisfaction with individual learners 'achievement in the education arena. In education, most systematic

transformation involved stakeholders that are critical to achieving the desired change (Watson &Regolith, 2008).

In Africa, specially, the written literature put more effort on parental contribution in financing education system and involvement in school decision-making as different to parental engagement in kids learning. In Ghana education policy has identified parental engagement as most significant core element (Adam, 2005; Pryor, 2005; Akyeampong et al., 2007). In the Rwandan perspective, the Government of Rwanda through the ministry of Education encourages parents to full participate and contributes largely in their children' education. Educational officials from different levels are also encouraged and accountable for creating a conducive environment that favors the full participation as well as partnership between parents and the school administration. This is in line of achieving Access and quality education which is an important agenda in the Rwanda's vision 2050. Which is to transform the country into the Knowledge based economy (Uwamariya, 2017). Other factors include but not limited to the parent's mindsets, low income, school environment which is not favorable for parents as well as time constraints for parents due to their daily works. Basing on the national examination results of 2015- 2019 and the school reports, Musanze district has been ranked among the poor performing districts in terms of student's performance MINEDUC ranking 2018. one would wonder if it is due to the use of unqualified and inexperienced teachers while others mention that it is the result of poor motivation of the teachers such as little salaries which is even come irregularly while others say that the school do not have the support from parents but this issue is not only in Musanze district but also across other districts of Rwanda. All of those aforementioned problems that are in education sector continue to prompt a great number of the researchers to analyze the cause of poor academic performance in Rwandan schools. However, there are other gaps in Rwandan schools among learners not only because they are not capable of learning but also because of family background of their parents such having illiterate parents. But even if illiterate parents can affect learners' academic performance, learners from such family have copying performance strategies adopted which enable them to perform better.

Research questions

What are the strategies used by illiterate parents to help their learners to perform academically in Musanze District? And What are the strategies adopted by learners with illiterate parents to perform academically in Musanze District?

Strategies adopted by illiterate parents to help in academic performance

In the developed countries parents are the main facilitators and guiders in teaching and learning process. Educational policy in USA stipulates that there should be a good relationship between parents and school in order to prevent poor school attainments

García-Holgado et al (2020). Cooperation is the main important aspect for supporting learners to achieve more in education career and sharpening their acceptable behaviors. The purpose of the family in education is development of the learners academically and in other ways of living. It is more profitable for the learners that to have a school, teachers, parents and community having partnership, with the purpose of supporting them. Many studies have concluded that such partnership for both parties should not be seen as an option rather as an obligation.

Nam and Park (2014) stated that race, ethnicity, category of country, parent's level of education, types of home facilitation, and other issues that can contribute in shaping education have a significant impact on learner's academic performance. You and Nguyen (2011) indicated that the relationship between child and parents is the foundation stone of learners' academic performance, as they interact a child develop in different ways because a little child learns more from his/her parents.

According to Thomas, Muls, De Backer and Lombaerts, (2020) indicated that communication and collaboration is crucial in developing learner's academic performance, this requires a mutual understanding between teachers, parents and local community when they work hand in hands, academic performance is easily attained. This makes the researcher to clarify everything and the link between these variables. There is high relationship between parental involvement and academic performance. And this can be among the tricks which can be utilized by learners, schools and parents.

Strategies adopted by learners with illiterate parents to perform better at school

Financial implications play a very big role in enhancing learner's academic achievement. Currently students from well living families attend their studies in excellent schools and also have the chance of going abroad to continue their studies where they think there is high quality education. On another hand when parents are not responsible for financing education of their children, children's education tend to be compromised hence failures in their academic success. Financial support includes various aspects such as paying school fees, paying extra- courses, buying school materials, paying trips, transports etc. All of this depends on socioeconomic status of the family. This shows a very big relationship between financial support and learner's academic performance. Some researchers like

(Orkin et al, 2019) indicated that socio economic status distinguish children academically; students from advantaged families seem to perform better than those from disadvantaged families. Bourdieu & Richardson (1986) indicates that parents can use money generated from different things to pay for school fees, buying equipment, sending children in seminars or conferences. One can use money to build a strong social status (Lareau, 2011). Children from poor and marginalized families due to poor economic means, their performance in academic performance tend to be low and

compromised (Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010). They are also other children from poor families who are supported by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), local community, humanitarian agencies who perform better than those from advantaged family, other side you can find some students who have all financial support but their performance is always unappreciable as long as their parents are not monitoring other things. Hence, we cannot ignore that financial means is important but it has to go hand in hand with other intervening elements parental involvement inclusive.

Research methodology

Study population is a group of people that any given research is targeting. Means that is a total population where the information were retrieved from during the journey of making research (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). The researcher used purposive sampling. A sample is one that is selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. A researcher studied the nature of school spirit as exhibited at a school rally/assembly, she had to interview people who did not appear to be caught up in the emotions of the crowd or students who did not attend the rally at all. In this case, the researcher used purposive sample because those being interviewed fit a specific purpose or description. The researcher decided to involve this people considering the information they have relating to education issues, especially those which can be helpful in responding or giving us some ideas about strategies adopted by learners whose parents are illiterate. Sample size is a group of people who are selected to represent others in study, the information given by selected people represented information of the whole population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The researcher used both probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling means that the elements included in population have an equal chance to be selected while non-probability sampling the items included in population do not have an equal chance to be selected to participate in study. The researcher used purposive sampling of five parents and five learners selected from Busogo sector, the total number of respondents were ten individual six females and four males.

The strategies used by illiterate parents to help their learners to perform academically in Busogo Sector

The information from interview granted by the researcher to the P1, P2 and P3 the findings proved that parents level of education influence negatively children academic achievement. From the findings all the parents were illiterate indicated that were neither ready to read or write. The impact or results, they cannot help their children at home when are working on homework provided by school facilitators. One of the parents had primary one level. However, he could not help children who is making secondary school while does not even know to read and write anything about other primary levels and finally this negative impact on students' academic performance at school. The respondents concluded that even if they are

not capable of helping their children but providing additional money to others government pay for their children is possible. Most of them have many children at their homes who need care of their parents. This provokes them to search for food and pay a little money remaining. Parents try to ask the learners how are the studies and how they expect to perform however, it does not mean that they know anything about studies, it is just showing the learners that they support them academically. Performance learners with illiterate parents is brought by their inner motivate and supportive environment. L1 and L2 lamented that: *it is not easy for them because their parents are not able neither read nor write a single in any language that exist at their schools. It requires them work hard on what they know and let those which are not understandable and rarely wait for support from group or teachers.*

Many other scholars quoted this in different ways. Currently, many parents and guardian are highly occupied by distraction and request of our daily life and are burdened by low-financial income, unfavorable working timetable and language obstacles, some guardians and parents are not capable of attending school meeting or play part in the education of their children on constant basis (Ho, 2009). According to Bæck (2010) as well as Lee and Bowen (2006) indicated that community norms, inadequate capital resources, and insufficient of education achievement as an obstacle to community involvement in schools.

The strategies adopted by learners with illiterate parents to perform academically

The findings from the learners who were interviewed indicated that even if their parents are illiterate, they have developed some of the strategies of helping them to cope with those challenges. Some of them before returning take some minutes to revise the contents provided by teachers on daily basis after revising, they directly go home to do other activities which always await them after class while others proved that they utilized free hours in the class to revise some of the contents with peer colleagues.

L5, L3, L4 added that before starting class and end starting it, they consult their teachers for the contents which was not well understood as teachers arrive at school before them, get the opportunity to approach them and ask some of the questions relating to their lesson. Most of learners also confirmed that this the best ways which help them to perform well as they know that their parents who do not know neither reading nor writing, cannot help them after reaching home. They further went on and disclosed that there is academic support they excerpt from their parents academically apart from paying school feeding and school fees for them. Other side is that they do not judge their parents because there are other solutions or support those parents can provide as they do not have any thing relate with lesson.

L1, L2, L4, L3, Disclosed that they have formed the group at their which help them to perform academically. The classmates sat together and form the groups according to the subject where they fit so that they help one another basing on their capability and saw this helpful for them because no other available strategies for them to cope with the situation.

..... most of the respondents added that school has computer lab and libraries which is always open for them before going home, they go there to read and explore what can be

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helpful for them in revision or for provided homework. After that they write short notes which can help them after reaching home so that they can refer them for what they summarize to work on their homework and exercises. In addition that, some learners have their friends, neighbors and relatives who ended their schools before they borrow books and notebooks so that they use them to enrich their knowledge and skills on the contents.

L1, L3, L5 disclosed that during the holidays have teams of the learners who studies from other strong schools. They have designed schedule for the holidays and ask classroom from head teachers in their local community where they sit and revise and share the contents which seems to be different from theirs. Everyone bring his/ her covered contents in last term and explain where there is a gap to others.

Majority of the respondents disclosed that they do not have monitoring from their guardians and parents. They confessed that when they arrive in their family, they are always engaged in their households' activities which await them after school and even if they inform their parents that they have school homework which can help them to perform well in their studies. However, the parent seems to provide deaf ear to plea. They always confirm that little should be trained to become future mothers and fathers of the families. So after finishing their households work, they seem to be fatigue and directly heads in bed. They indicated that their parents never help them to concentrate on their school activities or the monitoring if they have managed to work on their school home work. Learners with illiterate parents showed that sufficient monitoring is very important. But some of them said that socio-economic hardships and illiteracy of their parents hinder their academic achievement. As the results of that they do not get time to be together with their children and discuss on the issues of the school.

Discussion

Regarding the objective number one which was to, the investigation done which relate with the strategies used by illiterate parents to support their children academically were the findings revealed that The information from interview granted by the researcher to the P1, P2 and P3 the findings proved that parents level of education influence negatively children academic achievement. From the findings all the parents were illiterate indicated that were neither ready to read or write. The impact or results, they cannot help their children at home when are working on homework provided by school facilitators. One of the parents had primary one level. However, he could not help a children who is making secondary school while does not even know to read and write anything about other primary levels and finally this negative impact on students' academic performance at school. The respondents concluded that even if they are not capable of helping their children but providing additional money to others government pay for their children is possible. Most of they have many children at their homes who needs care of their parents. This indicated that learners have different strategies to use as they are at school.

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Regarding the objective number two which was to explore the strategies adopted by learners with illiterate parents to perform academically in Musanze District, the findings revealed that learners have adopted strategies which help them to be successful academically. Majority of the respondents disclosed that they do not have monitoring from their guardians and parents. Parents have many responsibilities of making follow up even if they do not know how to help their learners. However, the kind of support they provide is not that one which is academic. They only support them in feeding and motivating. Remaining part is for learners should be committed to approach others and seek the teachers for help. They confessed that when they arrive in their family, they are always engaged in their households' activities which await them after school and even if they inform their parents that they have school homework which can help them to perform well in their studies. However, the parent seems to provide deaf ear to plea. They always confirm that little should be trained to become future mothers and fathers of the families. So after finishing their households work, they seem to be fatigue and directly heads in bed. They indicated that their parents never help them to concentrate on their school activities or the monitoring if they have managed to work on their school home work.

Conclusion

Based on the findings this study concluded that there is investigate copying performance strategies adopted by learners with illiterate parents. This an important topic which should be discussed by many organs, government, non-governmental organization and other partners who have direct relationship with education system. In this study the researcher focused on those strategies as concluded that it contributes to the learning outcomes, continuous professional development which an important factor as in helps parents in increasing their knowledge, skills, confidence and the ways they can help their children. Learners needs much support from their teachers and administrative staff because as they don't have support from their home. Government and school staff have to be responsible.

Recommendations

The government is encouraged to continue with the program of adult education to ensure that parents who fail to go to school in the past are given the opportunity to read and write

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