Enhancement of Primary and Secondary School Education Through School-Based Mentorship Program

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Abstract: In teaching and learning process, every system of education needs an instruction media as well as pedagogical input. These show off when a change in this instruction media get to change or poor teaching methods arise.It is in this context, the current study investigated the enhancement of primary and secondary school education through school-based mentorship program in Rwanda. The population consisted of 118 primary and secondary school teachers in Rwanda. Stratified random sampling was used to select 36 school-based mentors and 82 primary and secondary teachers. A questionnaire survey consisting of open and closed questions was administered to 82 teachers and 36 school-based mentors both from primary and secondary schools. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze data where descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics such as t-Test was used to check the mean difference among the respondents. As findings, we found that through the help of school-based mentors, teacher's English language of instruction have improved as 63 out of 82 (76.8%) who responded rated this program's benefit more than 50%. Teachers confirmed that they gained several skills such as developing teaching materials, teach in English instruction media confidently, and they were able to discuss their challenges during mentoring sessions in the classrooms which never existed before this program. The t-Test was used to check whether there was the mean difference among the respondents, the study found that there is no statistical significance difference between school-based mentors and teachers' responses. The study concluded that the mentorship program was crucial for the success, continuous strengthening the capacity of the ministry staff is key to sustaining and embedding program interventions. Therefore, it is recommended that the ministry of education concerned departments and school administrators to continuously support the mentorship program as it was appreciated by the beneficiaries.

Keywords: School-based mentors, English language, pedagogical skills, performance of education, Rwanda

Introduction

The Rwanda education system is viewed by many as an engine for economic growth. After the genocide the country needed to re-build its education system that have been destroyed and failed to deliver the needed development. As reflected in different education policy documents, Rwanda needs to improve on its human capital index (World Bank, 2018). In the latest world bank report, Rwanda scored 0.37 in terms of the human capital index. This score is below the rest of the Eastern Africa countries. The country needs to improve the quality of teaching so as to achieve the economic growth the country is pursuing. Although teaching and learning in Rwanda was considered good before the genocide, the education system was prejudiced and underdeveloped. Furthermore, French and Kinyarwanda languages constituted the instruction media used in teaching and learning in Rwandan classrooms, the quality of education was an issue with highly unqualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and as well as pedagogical skills of teachers was seriously wanting. The need to rebuild the human capital after the genocide of 1994 was part of the Government strategy to recover the socio-economic development. The key pillar of Rwanda's vision 2020 highlights the importance of education and training to match the needs of the labour market. Also, as mirrored on Rwanda's vision 2020 policy documents, the quality improvements in classroom teaching and learning outcomes in basic education is equally important as illustrated in the ministry of education sector policy documents (MINEDUC, 2013). The same policy documents explain that the quality of basic education in Rwanda has been declining due to low caliber of skilled personnel/teachers. Additionally, the education sector established different education policy

programs in a bid to address the challenges of poor-quality education, while addressing the challenge of improving English proficiency and pedagogical skills of primary and secondary teachers has been considered as a priority for Rwandan education sector (MINEDUC, 2013).

Rwanda's position to join different economic blocks such as the East African Community and as well as joining Commonwealth countries necessitated the fundamental shift from French to English Language as instruction media across Primary, Secondary, and University education. However, the problem rises after the shift because few schoolteachers were fluent in English language. Teachers and students in Rwandan schools seemed to be better equipped and competent in their local language Kinyarwanda and French, however, different studies on language acquisition in Rwanda further revealed that teachers and students competencies especially in English was very poor, this situation was caused by the fact that primary and secondary teachers in Rwanda had a very poor languages proficiency skills (Sibomana, 2014).

Under this context, in 2014, the Rwandan Government hired 800 school-based mentors from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and were dispatched across the country. The aim of the school-based mentorship Program were to support and improve the quality of basic education in Rwandan schools, school-based mentors were responsible for improving Rwandan teachers' English language of instructional media following the shift from French to English Language as instruction media across primary and secondary education, school-based mentors were also responsible for creating teaching and learning instructional materials, work closely with schools on daily basis, observe classroom teaching practices, and provide teaching tips, which were considered beneficial to Rwandan teachers as indicated by Rwanda Education Board (REB). As reflected in the policy documents such as the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) considers school-based mentorship Program as a priority in providing the quality of education in both primary and secondary schools, and to support schoolteacher's ability to teach in the English language in the classroom. The vision 2020 considers also training teachers as vital initiatives in upgrading in-service teachers' skills set (MINEDUC, 2007). The study conducted by VVOB and the University of Rwanda College of Education (2018) further revealed that school-based mentors and coaching were considered as valuable ways in raising the effectiveness of teacher professional development in ensuring that different practices are embedded and enhance the positive values of professional development within the Rwandan classrooms(VVOB, 2018). Previous decades have shown that school-based mentors and coaching have been widely used in many aspects of organizational structures to support the development of skills (Eda Vula, Berisha, & Saqipi, 2015). The quality improvement of any educational context, the quality of school teachers and students learning outcome is directly proportional to what goes into classrooms (Baghdady & Zaki, 2019). The shift from instruction media in primary and secondary schools has opened doors for schools to teach in the English language. This is a challenging situation in the view that few teachers in Rwandan schools were fluent in English language, their proficiency level, and pedagogical skills need to be addressed through mentorship program as a solution. This study aimed to investigate the enhancement of primary and secondary school education through school-based mentorship program in Rwanda.

Literature Review

In line with above, Kent Janikula (2017) explains that school-based mentorship program when well appropriately implemented in schools, teachers feel happy and enjoys their work. School teachers (mentees) are more effective in the classrooms, their positive impact is enormous, and this understanding of the teachers is reflected in the student's learning outcomes. School-based mentors supports teachers to develop skills to improve students' learning outcomes (Janikula, 2017). Moreover, School-based mentors serves as facilitators to their mentees as they reflect on their classroom experience to gain more knowledge and skills to support their teaching practices, and every mentor is supposed to use his/her theoretical knowledge during the mentoring session to guide mentees in applying effective teaching practices in the classrooms. School-based mentors are supposed to be experienced and knowledgeable of the subject matter in order to improve their teachers (Paulinah Mudzielwana, 2014). At the primary and secondary school level, the mentorship program played a significant role in improving the English proficiency and pedagogical skills of Rwandan teachers. Rwandan teachers benefited from this mentorship program, which helped teachers to improve their teaching practices in the classrooms (Mohammad, Javed & Mohammad, 2015). Research studies in teacher education context reveal that teachers who are exposed to consistent and organized mentorship program demonstrate improvement than those that are not.

A study by Rujuan, Beijaard and Verloop conducted in Israel on English as an instructional media during mentoring, teachers responded that they gained teaching experience from their mentors, and their personal development improved tremendously, teachers responded also to have deepened their English proficiency such as grammar which helped them to develop their subject skills while teaching in the classrooms (Delaney, 2012). Furthermore, a study by John and Chimhenga (2016) conducted in Zimbabwe has

revealed that teachers acknowledged their participation in the mentoring activities to have improved their professional teaching techniques in the classroom. The Ministry of Education hired school-based mentors to coach and to support primary and secondary school teachers to developing their conceptual skills during the period of mentoring activities in the classroom. In Rwanda, classroom teaching practice encompasses the teachers (mentees) teaching under the direct supervision of the school-based mentor (Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2016) .Therefore, mentors have proven to be effective, providing knowledge and skills that their mentees need. There is a need for capable teachers who are well prepared to effectively deliver quality teaching in the classroom (Mukeredzi et al., 2015).

School-based mentors become more prominent because of their personal development traits and professional skills (Mohammad, Javed & Mohammad, 2015). For the case of Rwanda, the mentorship program is considered a solution for enhancing the performance of education. The benefits of mentorship program in the education context is evident, Porumb (2015) recalls that mentorship program have shown to be effective in developing teachers' conceptual skills. In fact, these two authors went on to report that there are positive results in terms of learning outcomes where mentorship program is implemented (Mathur, Gehrke, & Kim, 2013). Furthermore, an effective school-based mentor conveys different applicable pedagogical content understanding for his/her lesson delivery in the classroom (Hudson, 2013).

In teaching practices, pedagogical content understanding is crucial for teaching any particular subject matter in the classroom and schoolteacher's pedagogical skills can be illustrated into student's performance, therefore, teachers must have pedagogical understanding of the particular subject matter. According to Chad Majiros (2013), in the social exchange context, the knowledge which is composed of both explicit and tacit knowledge is exchanged or transferred between people during any social processes (Majiros, 2013). In recent studies in teaching and learning have revealed that mentorship programs may have a significant impact on positive teacher outcomes, in particular, the academic performance of students (Ismail, 2014). Furthermore, individuals within the organization or firms tend to make choices that provide them with the best possible outcomes for themselves and other opportunities accessible at their reach (Hamon & Bull, 2016). The fact that the need to develop a culturally sound and supportive mentorship program that fosters and builds competencies and skills development is critical for organizational performance. Despite the above, Janikula (2017) have found that compared to other sectors, the mentorship program is considered a key. However, there are has been limited research in this area to examine the extent to which mentorship program and classroom practices influences teacher's decision making. In this regard, more studies are needed in this area of mentorship program to know the perceptions, attitudes, and needs of teachers to make use of mentorship program more effective.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was used in this study. The target population was 118 primary and secondary teachers in which 36 of them were school-based mentors, while 82 were primary and secondary teachers in Rwanda. In total, 118 individuals were examined and hence formed the sample size of the current study. The target population was very conversant with the school-based mentorship program implemented in primary and secondary schools and were direct beneficiaries of this mentorship program. School-based mentors were assigned to schools and their primary responsibilities were train primary and secondary teachers on English language of instructional media and as well as improving Rwandan teachers' pedagogical skills in teaching, mentors were responsible for creating teaching and learning materials, and use of ICT to share different resources related to the subjects matter with Rwandan teachers.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods approaches were used in this study. Data collected was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively where descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to describe the data collected and inferential statistics such as t-Test was used to check whether there was the mean difference among the respondents. Questionnaires were used as a primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaires consisted of both open and closed questions and were designed to address the research objectives of this study. The questionnaires were addressed to schoolteachers and school-based mentors and the confidentiality of the provided responses were assured.

Quantitative data collected was summarized into MS Excel tables, and based on the responses from the respondents, the collected data was categorized as types to indicate the quantitative qualitative data where descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics such as t-Test was used to check the mean difference among the respondents. The collected data was recorded and calculated into MS Excel data analysis tools, and the level of significant was set at 0.05. Furthermore, the validity of the data instruments for this study were checked for correct content and formatting of this study instruments to confirm with the theoretical framework.

Results and Findings

The research sought to analyze the teacher's viewpoint on the role of the mentorship program for enhancing the performance of primary and secondary schools in Rwanda.

The role of school-based mentors for enhancing the performance of primary and secondary school teachers

The respondents had a consistent agreement on the role of school-based mentor program in their schools, also respondents had a satisfactory with the mentoring activities in schools. The background information on the respondents of this study show that 75% of schoolteachers strongly agree to the statement that school-based mentors' role in their schools enhanced their performance. While, 48% agree with the statement that school-based mentors were helpful and cooperative with teachers during mentoring sessions. On developing teaching materials, only 26 out of 101 of total respondents representing 25% of the respondents strongly agree that school-based mentors helped them to develop teaching materials for their classroom. Also, in line with that, 60 out of 101 representing 59% of the respondents agree to the statement that school-based mentors were helpful in helping them to develop teaching materials in the classroom. Also, 36 respondents out of 108 respondents representing 33% strongly agree to the statement and rated school-based mentors in enhancing their English language of instruction in the classroom, most of the respondent's English language of instruction have improved as they engaged with the school-based mentors on daily basis.

The study results show that teachers agree that the school-based mentors were flexible in dealing with them, teachers were more comfortable working with the mentors, and they felt comfortable discussing their problems with the school-based mentors. Only 50% agree while 10% disagreed with the statement that school-based mentors were flexible in dealing with teachers. In terms of ICT integration in education, only 57% of the respondents have agree with the statement that teachers use ICT in education, teachers were able to create teaching materials for their classrooms teaching using ICT with the help of school-based mentor. For the enhancing the school administration, only 33% of the respondents strongly agree that school-based mentors were helping school head teachers, director of studies and district education officers to identify priority areas of improvements such as pedagogical needs of teachers and model lessons preparations. The study results from the table 1 below indicate that that 47 out of 112 respondents representing 42% teachers strongly agree and rated school-based mentors highly to have cooperated with them and were helpful to them during mentoring sessions (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Rate the role of school-based mentors for enhancement of primary and secondary school teachers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Cooperative and helpful	0	0	6	54	47
Developing teaching materials	1	1	13	60	26
English language instruction	1	5	16	50	36
ICT integration in education	6	6	15	57	15
Pedagogical-content-knowledge	0	4	9	62	33
Helps DEO, SEO, HT, and DOS	1	3	15	52	35
Reporting on time problem and challenges	2	8	19	50	33
Flexible and discuss with me some challenges	2	10	12	56	31
Cooperative with parents	6	9	31	52	12

Note: District Education Officers (DEO), Sector education Officer (SEO), Head Teacher (HT), and Director of Studies (DOS)

A t-Test was used to check whether there was the mean difference among the respondents. The study result is presented in table 2 below. The statistical analysis that p-value 0.43>0.05 is greater than 0.05 indicating the difference between the school-based mentors (BSM) and teachers' responses on the mentorship program role for enhancement of primary and secondary school education was not statistically significance of 0.05 level (p=0.43) when t Stat is (0.173). therefore, based on the analysis, the study found that there is no statistical significance difference between school-based mentors and teachers' responses on mentorship role in schools.

Table 2. t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Teachers	*SBM*
Mean	2.039020568	2.004368262
Variance	0.122177186	0.038140441
Observations	4	4
Pooled Variance	0.080158814	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	6	
t Stat	0.173089806	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.434136201	
t Critical one-tail	1.943180281	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.868272403	
t Critical two-tail	2.446911851	

School-based mentors (SBM)

Contributions of school-based mentors' for enhancing the performance of primary and secondary schools

The question was to indicate whether school-based mentors contributed for enhancing the performance of primary and secondary education in Rwandan schools. As it is indicated in the figure 1 below, the researchers used rating to measure the significance of school-based mentor program in schools. As it is indicated in the study results, between the rage of 0-25% the respondents representing (7%) of the total schoolteachers investigated of 82 believed that school-based mentors contribute in enhancing the performance of education in primary and secondary schools. Between the rage of 25-50% of the respondents representing (17%) of the total schoolteachers investigated of 82 responded to the questionnaire believed that school-based mentors contribute in enhancing the performance of education in primary and secondary schools. Between the rage of 50-75% of the respondents representing (51%) of the total schoolteachers investigated of 82 responded to the questionnaire believed school-based mentors contribute in enhancing the performance of education in primary and secondary schools. Between the rage of 75-100% of the respondents representing (26%) of the total schoolteachers investigated of 82 responded to the questionnaire believed that school-based mentors contribute in enhancing the performance of education in Rwanda. On school-based mentor's side, the study results show that between the rage of 0-25% the school-based mentors representing (2%) of the total school-based mentors investigated believe that school-based mentor program contributes to the performance of education in primary and secondary schools. while between the rage of 25-50% of the respondents representing (22%) of the total school-based mentors investigated believed that school-based mentors contribute in enhancing the performance of education in primary and secondary schools. Between the rage of 50-75% of the school-based mentors investigate representing (41%) of the total school-based mentors investigated of 36 responded to the questionnaire believed school-based mentors contribute in enhancing the performance of education in primary and secondary schools. Between the rage of 75-100% of the school-based mentors investigated representing (33%) believe that school-based mentor contributes in enhancing the performance of education in Rwanda. The research intent to establish the extent to which the both teachers and school-based mentors sought or think about the contributions of the mentorship program in primary and secondary education in Rwandan schools. the finding has shown that 11 out of 36 school-based mentors and 20 out of 82 schoolteachers rated mentorship program in primary and secondary education at higher than 75 percent. However, this does not make any statistically significance difference among the responses.
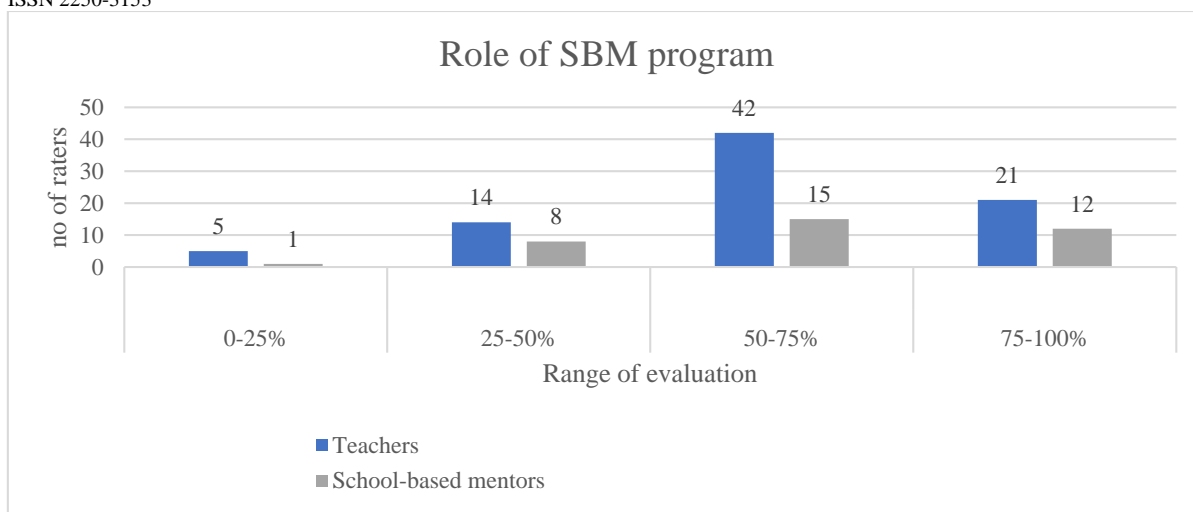
Figure 1. Respondents rates on contributions of school-based mentorship program

A t-Test was used to check whether there was the mean difference among the respondents. The study result is presented in table 2 below. The statistical analysis that p-value 0.43>0.05 is greater than 0.05 indicating the difference between the school-based mentors (BSM) and teachers' responses on the contribution of the mentorship program for enhancing primary and secondary school education was not statistically significance of 0.05 level (p=0.43) when t Stat is (0.173). Therefore, based on the analysis, the study found that there is no statistical significance difference between school-based mentors and teachers' responses on contribution of the mentorship program for enhancing primary and secondary school education.

Table 3. t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Teachers	*SBM*
Mean	2.959349593	2.898148
Variance	0.429054167	0.646473
Observations	82	36
Pooled Variance	0.494654575	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	116	
t Stat	0.435239033	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.332098831	
t Critical one-tail	1.658095744	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.664197661	
t Critical two-tail	1.980626002	

Challenges in usage of resources sharing amongst school-based mentors and teachers

Usage of resource sharing amongst the school-based mentors and schoolteachers and the challenges faced while sharing resources using online portal. The respondents were asked to state how often they share resources with their colleagues using online portal. The ICT devices such as laptops and internet modems were given to school-based mentors for easy communication among the mentors across the country, these laptops and internet modems were supposed to be used by mentors to create teaching materials and by Rwandan teachers during mentoring session and peer learning with their school mentors. The study findings show that only 69 out 114 respondents representing (61%) agree to have shared their resources with their colleagues. While, 20 out 112 respondents representing (18%) stayed neutral to the statement, meaning that they do not use the portal or never used portal all. Still on the usage of resources and use of online portal among the school-based mentors and teachers, the study results show that online portal were used mostly by school-based mentors, since they were supposed to create teaching and learning resources to be used by Rwandan school teachers, on the side of school teachers the usage few were using online portal. However, the study findings show that there is no statistical significance difference between school-based mentors and schoolteachers according to how they use online portal to share their resources.

Discussion of findings

The study findings demonstrate that school-based mentorship program improved teachers' English language proficiency, teachers indicated that they were able to create classroom teaching materials for use in the classrooms and teach in English. Teachers investigated in this study strongly agree that school-based mentors' program in their schools were helpful to them, very supportive and were able learn how to develop their own teaching materials, teachers were able to perform and teach in English language as language of instructional in the classroom. To Helms-Lorenz, Slof and Van de Grift (2013) have indicated that mentorship programs in schools have influenced teachers' belief in teaching practices, teaching abilities, organization skills, and as well as intermingling with students (Lejonberg & Christophersen, 2015). For the role of school-based mentors, the study revealed that through the mentorship program, teachers are assisted extensively in developing teaching practices and approaches that foster reflection in their daily work practices. This mentorship program introduced new ways of addressing the issue of poor learning outcomes caused by the lack of teaching and learning materials, develop teachers' skills in developing classroom materials, and use of technologies, moreover, this mentorship program focused particularly on improving learning outcomes in basic education. School-based mentors were assigned to schools, work with teachers and school administration on daily basis. This result is consistent with the studies by Jo Shan Fu (2013) who underlined clearly that access to technology is considered effective and powerful for enhancing and contributing to educational reform (Fu, 2013). Furthermore, the respondents in the study pointed out the lack of necessary materials and other ICT tools such as computers and the internet in their schools. Teachers cited lack of enough time for the training and lack of teaching materials and other essentials and tools for them to keep practicing.

Social exchange theory provides an understanding into the way school-based mentor's and mentee's participatory behaviors are constructed on the perceived benefits and costs in the mentoring relationships environment. In the context, only 51% of the respondents in the study believed that school-based mentorship program contributed highly in enhancing the performance of primary and secondary education in Rwanda. Therefore, the mentorship program is useful for organization growth and development, which enhances human interactions and peer support that plays essential role for organizational development, and this, Indeed, schools are considered organizations of this type (Berziņa, 2011). On behalf of teachers, the study findings shows that there are 7% of schoolteachers did not think that school-based mentorship program contributed to the performance of primary and secondary education in Rwanda. The reason is that some schools did not have all the necessary equipment's such as computers, internet connection and other teaching aids available to teachers and school-based mentors to use them during mentoring sessions.

Additionally, school-based mentors used information and communication technology (ICT) to connect to each other. Challenges schoolteachers and mentors encountered while sharing resources, the study findings showed, schoolteachers complained that they did not have ICT tools such as laptops and internet modems to facilitate them in creating and sharing their resources with their colleagues. Researchers found out that 18% of the schoolteachers did not share their resources with colleagues meaning that they do not use the portal or never used portal all. It is evident from this study that teachers needed time to reflect on skills set gained during program implementation, and also to reflect on their teaching practices vis- a-vis best practices from their mentors to be replicated into the classroom practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate the enhancement of primary and secondary school education through school-based mentorship program in Rwanda. The school-based mentorship program is required and was highly appreciated by the beneficiaries. There has been an improvement in teachers' English language proficiency. Lack of teaching materials, administrative support was cited as an obstacle to the program's success teachers felt they are left alone and unsupported. It was also found that school-based mentorship program was not properly communicated to all stakeholders, and so, some of the schools did not embrace it. Limited usage of online portal for resource sharing among school-based mentors and schoolteachers is associated with the lack of training on the use of online portal.

The study recommends the following; firstly, increasing access to classroom teaching materials and learning resources in schools would enhance and improve teaching practices in the classrooms. Secondly, supporting the mentorship program is crucial for the success of the program, furthermore, continuous strengthening the capacity of the ministry of education concerned departments is key in the sustaining the interventions made by the program. The need for strengthening the stakeholders' engagement within the ministry of education and its affiliated agencies responsible for the program implementation is crucial. Finally, at the institution level, there is

an urgent need for scaling up school mentorship program to other schools and as well as establishing the mechanism to evaluate the impact of mentorship program in schools.

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