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# Influence of Free Education Policy on Quality Education in Day Public Secondary Schools in Huye District, Rwanda

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## Abstract

The introduction of free education policy in Rwanda allowed more pupils to have access on basic education at a very low cost. As a result, there was an increased students' enrolment which has greatly influenced the quality of education. This study examined the influence of free education policy on quality of education in day public secondary schools in Huye District, Rwanda. Five research questions guided this study. These are; to what extent does free education policy affect quality education in Huye District? What are the socio-economic factors affecting quality education in Huye District? What are the challenges the government faces in providing quality education? What government mechanisms exist which promote quality education in Huye district? What strategies can be employed to improve quality education in Huye district? The problem under study employed Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory of Walter Shewart. The study employed mixed method approach specifically concurrent parallel method. The target population was all the teachers, all the head teachers and all the District Education Officer in Huye District. Head Teachers and District Education Officers were purposively sampled while proportionate random sampling was used to select teachers. Data was collected from 110 participants. Four research instruments were used; these are questionnaire for teachers, interview guides for Head Teachers and District Education Officers, document analysis guide and observation guide. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in figures and tables, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data were analyzed by the use of content analysis technique whereby findings were presented in narrative forms, quoting some answers from the respondents. With regard to ethics, participants' consent was sought and confidentiality of their identity and answers were guaranteed. The study revealed that FEP resulted

in large classes of more than 50 students per class which adversely affected teaching and learning processes. The number of classroom and books were still few to allow quality education while laboratories and playgrounds were lacking. School funds for feeding, facilities, teachers' motivation and parents' participation required more improvements. The study recommended that the government should increase resources and train teachers on the methods of teaching competence-based curriculum. It should also safeguard the stability of education system in Rwanda. Parents and community at large should actively participate in education of their children. For quality education provision and control, primary and secondary levels should have different head teachers. This would help to provide head teachers with more time for supervising teaching and others school activities.

**Keywords:** *Free Education Policy, Socio-Economic Factors, Challenges, Government Mechanisms, Strategies, Quality Education, Huye District*

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Education is widely known to be a key for economic, political and social development of any nation. It plays a significant role in eradicating poverty and enabling people to actively engage in the growth of society. Turkkahraman (2012) argues that education provides instruction and personality formation which prevent people from falling behind the changing social and economic conditions. Thus, through education, society has the function and obligation to lift the ability and aptitudes of its people to the velocity with which today the world is changing. However, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that the use of school charges was a major barrier to millions of children from enrolling and completing their main and secondary education owing to poverty in third world countries, including Africa (UNESCO, 2007).

Rwanda is another of the many African countries which experienced low primary and secondary enrolment for many years. After the 1994 genocide which devastated the country's social, political and economic life also deteriorated the education system. The country struggled to repair classes and build new ones, reintegrate teachers in the teaching force, and create funds for educating the orphans. Despite this access to primary and secondary education was still limited and poor enrolment continued to be experienced due to the poverty of the parents. As a response, the government of Rwanda adopted free education under Education for All program. The country introduced free education as part of the government policy to improve school enrolment in general and attendance of deprived children in particular.

The Ministry of Education in Rwanda introduced fee-free schooling for Nine Year Basic Education- including primary and lower secondary. On one hand, Nine Year Basic Education replaced the distinction between primary (6years) and lower secondary education (3years) in order to deliver a full nine year program. On the other hand, it projected the Twelve Year Basic Education program which aims at facilitating children who reach the end of nine year with an entitlement to a further three years of education (RESSP, 2006-2010). They continue education either in Teacher Training College (TTC), General Secondary or in Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET). In addition to expanding ability and teaching infrastructure at public schools, the Ministry of Education has also launched the school feeding program and abolished school charges, making them more affordable for parents (Rukabu, 2015).

Since the abolition of fees a great variation in enrolment rate in secondary education before and after fee-free education could be observed. Before free secondary education, schools' enrolment between years 2000 and 2005 is shown in Table 1

**Table 1: Enrolment in Secondary Schools in Rwanda before FEP 2000 – 2005**

Year	Number of enrolments	Enrolment Rate (%)
2000	125,124	10.2%
2001	141,163	10.4%
2002	157,210	11.2%
2003	179,153	13.4%
2004	203,551	15.4%
2005	218,517	16.6%

### **Ministry of Education, 2015**

The data in Table 1 show that enrolment in secondary schools in Rwanda was increasing at a low rate between 2000 and 2002 and then rose slightly in years 2003, 2004 and 2005. This evolution was probably due to the government's efforts to mobilize parents to send children to school but the cost of fees, textbooks and uniforms was still a challenge to many. It was after the introduction of free secondary education that increases in enrolment became remarkable. The enrolment in secondary schools after the adoption of free secondary education policy between the years 2012 and 2017 is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Enrolment in Secondary Schools in Rwanda after FEP 2012 – 2017**

Year	Number of enrolments	Enrolment Rate (%)
2012	534,712	38.0%
2013	566,370	41.5%
2014	565,312	40.7%
2015	543,936	38.0%
2016	553,739	40.5%
2017	592,501	43.4%

### **Ministry of Education, 2018**

The data in Table 2 show a sudden increase in secondary schools' enrolment (more than the double of 2005) between 2012 and 2013. The slight decrease in enrolment in 2015 was likely triggered by the decision of parents to bring their kids to private schools as they overcrowded public schools. However, in 2016 and 2017 enrolment rose again. It is noted that a higher increased enrolment observed and which was attributed to free education policy in the country probably had an influence on quality of education.

Literature shows that free education led to low quality of education in many African countries including Rwanda. The Southern Province of Rwanda and Huye District in particular is not exempted from experiencing the same concern. In the free day secondary schools, parents and other teachers are questioning the quality of education given to their children. Therefore, this research attempted to investigate the impact of free education policy on educational quality in

Huye District, Rwanda's government day high schools. Challenges and feasible improvement measures have also been recognized.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Free day high schools in Huye District face the issue of bad infrastructure, high enrolment and elevated student-teacher ratio in classrooms, which tend to impact the quality of teaching and learning in terms of techniques used, adequacy of equipment and follow-up of the work of learners, among others. Nkurunziza (2012) argues that although Rwanda has adopted free education policy, the educational objectives have not been qualitatively achieved, rather high enrolment rate led to decline in quality.

The government is committed to address this problem by ensuring that quality and relevance in education are given a strong attention by monitoring and reviewing the curriculum, using pre-service and in-service methods to train teachers, putting in place different forms of teacher motivation, inspecting schools and teachers, recruiting more teachers, as well as providing relevant textbooks and equipping science laboratories (MOE, 2013). Although some changes and transformation have taken place, quality performance in schools remains a big concern to parents, teachers and head teachers (Mugisha, 2017). With a continuous low quality education, the country's investment in education will be a waste.

In spite the government's effort for enhancing quality, poor quality education is still experienced in public schools in Rwanda. This has resulted in low pass rates, elevated dropout rates, underdeveloped abilities where students are still unable to read, write, and are not ready for self-employment or employment (Nzabalarwa, 2015). This implies that the processes that exist for promoting quality education need to be analyzed and alternative practical policies that need to be adopted in order to guarantee quality education.

Literature reviewed (Namara, 2012; Nzabalarwa, 2015; Safari, 2016 and Williams, 2016) addressing quality education in Rwanda, shows that scholars have not adequately addressed the issue of quality education in day secondary schools. In addition, the studies have not adequately provided the practical strategies for improving quality education in day secondary schools with a particular attention to Southern Province, specifically Huye District. The researcher therefore intended to investigate the influence of free education policy on quality education in day secondary schools in Huye District.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does free education policy affect quality education in day public secondary schools in Huye District?
2. What are the socio-economic factors influencing quality education in day public secondary schools in Huye District?
3. What are the challenges that the government faces in providing quality education in Huye District?
4. What government mechanisms exist in day secondary schools which promote quality education in Huye District?



5. What strategies can be employed to effectively improve quality education in Huye District?

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

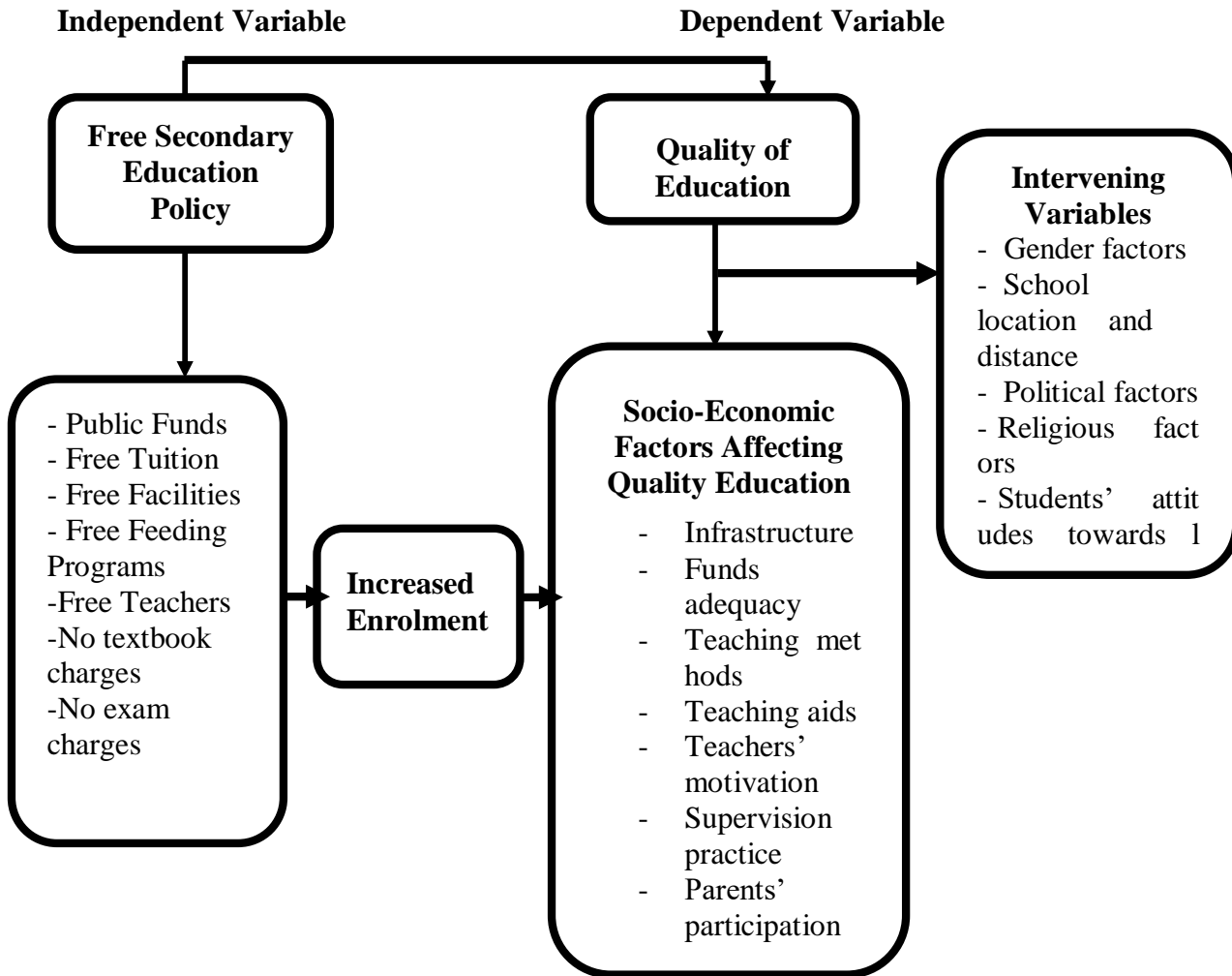
The researcher related the problem under study to Total Quality Management theory (TQM) which was developed by Walter Shewart and improved by many other scholars. This section analyzes the importance of total quality management theory as the basis of the framework for improving quality education while providing free education in Huye District, Rwanda. The development of Total Quality Management theory (TQM) was led by different quality scholars including Walter Shewart as one of the main precursors but also Philip Crosby, Edward Deming, Armand Feignbaum, Kaoru Ishikawa and Joseph Juran (Westcott, 2013).

The TQM theory was the basis of this study in that, for free education to be effective, those who are involved must pay attention to quality in all its dimensions. They have to ensure that there is quality in admissions or enrolment, materials and infrastructure, qualified and motivated teachers, as well as monitoring of education processes in schools so that students' needs and societal needs for development are satisfied. For quality to be attained, supervision of the process should ensure that challenges are identified on time and strategies are put in place.

The theory suggests that schools should always seek for continuous quality improvement and the satisfying of students' needs. Management commitment, teachers' involvement, provision of teaching environment and facilities, training and motivation of teachers, quality methods and team working can lead to effective educational quality management in schools. Therefore, free education in Huye secondary schools would be significantly successful not only by increasing access to education but also by paying attention to quality improvement through those indicators suggested by Total Quality Management theory. The theory is an appropriate mean of examining quality level in providing free education in schools. The commitment to provide quality in education considers all aspects and realities that make up a school like teachers, students, leaders, policies in place, materials, infrastructure, as well as the family and environment in which teaching and learning activities are being performed.

### **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework is a research instrument that helps the researcher create knowledge and consciousness of the scenario under study. It is a structure which the researcher believes can best explain the natural progression and relationship of the variables to be studied (Adom, Kamil & Agyem, 2018). It shows the relationship between dependent and independent variables. This is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing Relationship between Variables**

The diagram in Figure 1 shows the relationship between free education policy and the commitment to achieve quality education. In order to define the connection between the two variables, it obviously defines the variables to be studied.

It has been said that the implementation of free education policy in Rwanda's public schools has an impact on quality education standards. Free education policy permitted more learners without paying tuition fees to access fundamental education. Through public funds the government provides school facilities, teachers, textbooks, feeding and examination facilities to students free of charge. Consequently, free education policy resulted in a remarkable increase in enrolment which affected the provision of quality education in public schools.

This research therefore sought to explore the extent to which quality of education is compromised. By studying the socio-economic factors affecting education quality (teaching methods, materials,

infrastructure, adequacy of funds, teachers' motivation, supervision and parents' participation) and the existing mechanisms for promoting quality education in day public secondary schools in Huye District, this study established the influence of free education policy on quality of education in the area under study. Quality depends on how free education is implemented; hence independent variable is free secondary education policy while the dependent variable is the quality of education. Therefore the combination of the variables under study would make free education programs to be successful in Huye District. When these variables are paired they will result into a quality system that ensures adequate methodology, materials, infrastructure, teachers, supervision and participation of the parents.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

Safari (2016) investigated the causes of school dropout in Musanze, Gasabo and Ngororero districts, Rwanda. In this study interview guide was used to collect data from the parents in the districts concerned. Food scarcity, irresponsible parenting, family conflicts, separation and polygamy, being an orphan and head of the family, as well as parents' ignorance were found to affect students' learning processes. Some families in Musanze district are too poor to afford enough food so children go to school hungry and cannot participate adequately in the classroom. Such children are easily recruited in activities like farm labor and working as home maids because these provide hope for food; hence school becomes not interesting. It was found as well that children born without planning have little chance for schooling especially when their mothers (usually single mothers) have limited financial resources. Therefore, unstable family conditions like poverty, conflicts, separation and divorce often resulted in poor quality education and school dropout in Musanze, Gasabo and Ngororero districts. The current research used blended techniques to gather information from educators and directors in Huye District, Southern Province of Rwanda, to determine whether perceived bad quality education in free day secondary schools might be linked to the family circumstances of learners.

Ndabaga and Tabaro (2015) argue that most Rwandans have little knowledge in English and French, languages in which children are forced to do formal learning despite that they all share one language, Kinyarwanda, the mother tongue. Curriculum rooted in the child's known language, culture and environment, with appropriate and locally-developed reading and curriculum materials would be crucial for education success. Since 2009, Rwandans are taught in English while they cannot express in it easily as oral fluency is concerned, and the government intends to implement a competence-based curriculum. One may wonder how education shall be successfully qualitative if learners cannot express themselves in English as language of instruction. This study assessed whether language difficulties might be among the factors affecting quality education in Huye District.

In Rwanda, the Ministry of Education (2013) has put in place mechanisms for educational improvement, notably: rapid infrastructure programs involving the communities in construction of new classrooms to suit the rising number of enrolments; greater focus on teacher qualification and procurement of learning materials like textbooks in English, the new instructional language; teacher training workshops, particularly in English; training of administrators in order to raise individual capacities to mount reforms; establishing Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in all the schools to increase collaboration and parental responsibility. Furthermore, decentralization of education administration at the district level, particularly in relation to assessing local schools'



needs and funding systems; and establishment of Rwanda Education Board (REB) in 2011 for monitoring and evaluation by setting quality standards, visits to schools, training seminars in order to ensure that curriculum and material distributed are effectively used by teachers. Beside these measures, poor quality seems to persist in Rwanda. The current study sought to explore the causes of persisting poor quality and possible strategies for improvement.

Nzabalirwa (2015) studied the challenges of quality education in Rwanda and future prospects. The study found out the government improved teacher motivation and working conditions, performance contracts, housing and loans for teachers. It was suggested to increase teachers ' skills in English language and parents ' knowledge of their accountability in education in order to enhance quality in education. The research also proposed that the government should improve the real allocation of budget for the education industry. Some of these suggested approaches, however, are also one of the processes that the government has already implemented; but low-quality education is still an attractive problem in the nation. The current research attempted to find out why the current processes in Huye District, Southern Rwanda, do not appear to be working.

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

The study was conducted in Huye District of southern province in Rwanda. The district had 51 secondary schools among them 6 private and 45 public. However, 31 out of 45 public schools are day secondary schools offering free tuition education (District Education Office, 2018). This research embraced a mixed method paradigm strategy with a parallel mixed method design specifically concurrent. The target population of this study included all the 470 teachers (346 males and 124 females), 31 head teachers and 2 district education officers in day public secondary schools in Huye District. District education officers and head teachers were considered having the common information and experience on the situation of quality education in day secondary schools in Huye District. The summary of sample and sampling techniques is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Summary of Sample Size and Techniques**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Sampling Techniques</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Actual Sample</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Schools</b>	Simple random sampling	31	8	25%
<b>Head Teachers</b>	Purposive sampling	31	8	25%
<b>Teachers</b>	Proportionate random sampling	470	100	27%
<b>District E. Officers</b>	Purposive sampling	2	2	100%
<b>Total</b>		<b>503</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>27%</b>

Four research instruments were used in this study. These are questionnaire for teachers, interview guide for head teachers and District Education Officers, document analysis guide and observation guide to get information on school facilities. In one day secondary school, which will not engage in the final research, the questionnaire tool was screened. In a pre-test, ten (10) educators received questionnaires to reply.

In order to evaluate information, the investigator introduced qualitative and quantitative methods. Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program, quantitative data were

organized and coded for analysis. Based on particular categories, data were entered into the SPSS program and recorded using descriptive statistics to produce frequencies and percentages. The results were provided with explanations in tables, bar graphs and pie charts. Descriptive statistics helped to summarize and describe the respondents' features and their opinions on the study's various elements. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended questions were analyzed by use of content analysis technique. The raw data were first organized during which it was edited in order to derive meaning from it. The organized data were then coded and put into categories from which themes were generated. The analyzed data were presented in form of narratives where verbatim reports of respondents were quoted.

#### **4.0 Results and Findings**

##### **4.1 Return Rate of Research Instruments**

The questionnaires were distributed to 100 teachers from 8 schools while 8 head teachers and 2 DEOs were interviewed as described in chapter three. The response return rate was 96.3% as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Return Rate of Research Instruments**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>issued</b>	<b>Responded to</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	100	96	96%
<b>Head teachers</b>	8	8	100%
<b>DEOs</b>	2	2	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>96.3%</b>

Table 4 shows that, out of 100 teachers only 96 (96%) teacher respondents returned their responses. With regard to interviews 8 (100%) head teachers and 2 (100%) DEOs responded to the research questions as it was planned by the researcher. This gave a total number of 106 (96.3%) research participants. According to Babbie (2002) any research instruments' return of 50% and above is adequate for analysis. Therefore, the return rate of 96.3% was considered reasonable.

##### **4.2 Extent to Which Free Education Policy Affects Quality Education**

Research question one was to find out the extent to which free education policy affected quality education in Huye District. Responses are as per Table 8.

**Table 5: Extent to Which Free Education Policy Affects Quality Education**

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
FEP increased the number of students per teachers	75	78.1	14	14.7	3	3.1	3	3.1	1	1
FEP lowered students' performance	21	21.9	47	48.9	10	10.5	7	7.3	11	11.5
Students are many and teachers cannot give them enough attention	43	44.7	34	34.7	6	6.3	7	7.3	7	7.3
FEP caused inadequate number of teachers	13	13.5	29	29.6	16	16.7	2	2.1	19	19.8
FEP reduced teachers' motivation	24	25.8	29	29.8	8	8.3	2	2.1	15	15.6
There is inadequate teaching materials	26	27.1	65	67.1	10	10.4	17	17.7	7	7.3
FEP affected teaching methods	13	13.5	37	38.5	8	8.3	2	2.1	13	13.5
FEP led to classrooms' congestion	39	40.6	38	39.6	6	6.3	9	9.4	4	4.2
FEP caused inadequate number of classrooms	34	35.4	39	39.6	7	7.3	10	10.4	7	7.3
FEP resulted in lacking laboratories	44	45.8	31	32.3	7	7.3	8	8.3	6	6.3
FEP caused inadequacy of playgrounds	19	19.2	34	34.7	12	12.5	2	2.1	8	8.3
FEP caused insufficient funds from government	28	29.2	37	37.6	2	2.1	5	5.2	6	6.3
Head teachers cannot supervise all classes	12	12.5	28	28.7	2	2.1	20	20.8	17	17.7
FEP reduced parents' participation	53	55.2	34	34.7	-	-	3	3.1	7	7.3

Concerning the effect of free education policy on students' numbers, data presented in Table 5 show that 81 (92.8%) teachers agreed that there is an increased enrolment since the introduction of free secondary education policy. This is clearly confirmed by the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> statements of the same table where 76 (79.1%) respondents also agreed that students are very many, 77 (80.2%) reported classroom congestion and 72 (75%) reported inadequate number of classrooms. Head teachers and DEOs also said that the students' enrolment is very high especially in lower classes while school facilities remain the same. One DEO pointed out this:

High enrolment is the main challenge we are facing. In free education programs education is cheap and children are increasing day after day. However, the ability to expand school facilities still is limited. When we get additional classroom we lack equipment mostly desks (Female DEO, May 20, 2019).

Therefore, this makes it clear that imbalance between students' numbers and facilities may affect quality provision in day secondary schools in Huye District. The findings are in line with Mobela (2015) who found out that FEP resulted in high students' enrolment and inadequate facilities.

Regarding the influence of FEP on students' performance, 21 (21.9%) teachers strongly agreed and 47 (48.9%) agreed; accumulating 68 (70.8%) teachers who responded that FEP had lowered students' performance in day secondary schools. On the one hand, DEOs did not agree with this because almost all students who sit for national examination get their secondary certificates. The document analysis reviewed indicated that the percentage of schools' performance in national examinations was between 81% and 99%. This apparently shows that students' performance was not affected. On the other hand however, head teachers argued that certificates are not enough for success. The comments from one of the head teachers interviewed included the following:

“Quality performance is not measured by the number of certificates delivered but more significantly on the quality of these certificates. If out of certificates delivered only very few students are qualified for further studies, performance is not good at all” (Male head teacher, April 26, 2019).

Data depicts that almost all the students in free day secondary schools get certificates of secondary level completion but their grades cannot take them far in terms of further studies. Therefore quality performance was compromised. Findings reveal that students' performance in day secondary schools should go beyond just a completion certificates but improve on their future educational opportunities.

The majority of respondents 45 (46.9%) indicated that FEP did not affect teachers' number as they are appointed on the basis of students' number in each school. However teacher' motivation was affected as indicated by 52 (54.3%) teacher respondents. The findings also revealed that teaching materials and methods were affected. This was indicated by 62 (64.6%) and 50 (52%) respondents who generally agreed that FEP affected teaching materials and teaching methods respectively. A head teacher added that production of teaching aids for all subjects and in all day schools is very expensive. This goes beyond the government abilities. Teachers are to explore their creativity talents to produce more materials but time is also limited.

Table 8 depicts that the accumulative number of 72 (74%) teachers affirmed that FEP caused inadequate number of classrooms. This included 34 (35.4%) teachers who strongly agreed and 38 (39.6%) teachers who simply agreed. The observation guide revealed that, classrooms were well-maintained in good conditions in terms of aeration, protection from outside distractions and they were clean. Nonetheless, their quantity was inadequate because classrooms congestions were observed in all the school visited. One DEO explained that:

Any addition of a single classroom in the school requires planning. This is because additional classroom implies funds for basic equipment,

recruitment of a new teacher and provision of the salary. All these cannot be thought of in one day (Male DEO, May 27, 2019).

Findings suggested that schools in Huye District needed more classrooms for students' comfort and attention. This would enhance quality learning as supported by Adede (2016) who said that adequate classrooms are very important components in ensuring successful and sustainable quality education.

Again Table 5 depicts that 75 (78.1%) respondents agreed that there is lack of laboratories in day secondary schools. This included 45.8% who strongly agreed and 32.3% who only agreed. Similarly, the observation guide indicated that there were no laboratories in day secondary schools. This indicates that lack of these teaching and learning facilities could lead to poor quality education.

Concerning playgrounds, 19 (19.8%) teachers strongly agreed and 33 (34.4%) agreed that FEP caused inadequacy of playgrounds in day secondary schools. Thus the accumulative results of 52 (54.2%) teachers showed lack of playgrounds. Head teachers said that more playgrounds are in the year plans but their realization depends on the funds available and the other urgent school needs. Similarly, DEOs revealed to the researcher that school needs are many including playgrounds but they respond to them step by step.

Observation guide on the availability of physical facilities showed that playgrounds were lacking in day schools. Students had no much space for games. Only two schools had basketball and volleyball fields even if they were poorly maintained. This would hinder the attainment of quality education as supported by Ndemba (2014) who argued that lack of co-curricular facilities affects students' quality learning.

The researcher also sought to assess whether FEP affects school funds. Findings indicated that 28 (29.2%) teachers strongly agreed and 36 (37.5%) agreed that school funds as provided by the government are not sufficient. This shows that the majority of teacher respondents (66.7%) reported insufficient funds. Head teachers said that, apart from insufficient funding there is also delay in releasing those funds. One head teacher affirmed funds delay in this way:

School funds are released towards the end of the semester while schools need them from the opening. For example, we are currently ending classes at 2pm instead of 5pm because of feeding funds delays. Students go home early as the school cannot provide their lunch. This situation disturbs school activities a lot (Female head teacher, April 30, 2019).

Another head teacher added this:

School funding is insufficient especially funds for feeding program. Every student gets 56frw per day for feeding program, parents are supposed to complete the rest but they do not do it. The government's order is that all students should eat and no one to be left out whether the parents have paid or not. In order to survive schools borrow food from the suppliers who accept to wait till the funds are released. But most of the time funds do not cover the loan (Male head teacher, May3, 2019).

Respondents said that school funds are used for many things (materials, infrastructure, repair and maintenance, cooks, cleaners, security guards, feeding, teachers' motivation). Parents are supposed to pay 3000frw (approximately 6 US Dollars) per term to complete feeding funds but



very few do it. One DEO said “government funds for free education cannot be sufficient without parents’ help. Unfortunately, parents do not understand why we ask them to contribute if education is free. I think we need to sensitize them on the sense of their participation”.

Other reasons for insufficient funds were that price of goods had increased on the market but government funds did not change since the introduction of free education. In addition schools cannot buy from cheaper suppliers because of the policy of market competition. Schools announce market competition through social media (mostly radio), and business people who win competition supply goods. All this process consumes much money and competitors always charge higher price because they have to pay taxes. The document analysis guide clearly indicated that total school expenditures exceeded total income in most of the schools. Head teachers said that in such cases, part of the funds for the current semester is used to pay some expenditures of the previous one.

These participants’ assertions showed that in most of the day colleges created under free education policy, there are economic problems. The finding is compatible with Njihia and Nderitu (2014) who discovered that the college funds supplied under FEP by the government are not sufficient to provide high-quality secondary education.

#### **4.3 Social Economic Factors Affecting Quality Education in Day Schools**

The researcher wanted to find out the possible factors in the school environment that would contribute to poor quality education in the study area. Findings are presented below:

**Table 6: Social Environment Factors Affecting Quality Education**

Social environment factors	Teachers		Head Teachers		DEOs	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Long school-home distance	90	93.8	7	87.5	1	50
school location	90	93.8	5	62.5	-	-
Influence of social media	96	100	8	100	2	100
Lack of job	65	67.7	4	50	1	50
Poor use of English	48	50	5	62.5	2	100
Lack of electricity connections	26	27.1	2	25	-	-

Table 6 shows that 90 (93.8%) teachers, 7 (87.5%) head teachers and 1 (50%) DEO were of the opinion that school-home distances affected quality teaching and learning. Many students cover long distance every day. This increased delay, absenteeism and even drop out cases. One teacher filled the questionnaire and wrote that there were no teachers’ and students’ accommodation in these types of schools. Teachers try to be punctual and very few are rarely late. However, every morning they deal with many students who are latecomers. This often disturbs morning classes. Findings established that since free education policy removed boarding facilities, distance has become one of the external factors that affected teachers and students in free day secondary schools. This pulls down school performances.

Furthermore, school location was another social environment factor which affects education in the area. This was indicated by 90 (93.7%) teachers and 5 (62.5%) head teachers. District Education Officers did not mention any issue about school location. Teacher and head teacher participants were of the opinion that schools located near the city, markets or stadiums have challenges of school attendance. One head teacher said: “Today is a market day. I was

checking attendance lists and found that at least five students were absent in each classroom and this repeatedly occurs when there is market”.

In a different school, another head teacher added that when there is football match or any other game at Huye stadium, many students mostly boys do not come to school. Students do not even care about discipline measures in the school. However, the participants argued that local authorities had ordered that all games should be scheduled in the week-ends but it could not always be possible. Therefore, the study established that schools need to clearly define rules and regulations which ensure that students are retained at school.

In regard to the influence of social media the unanimity of all teachers, head teachers and DEOs expressed concern that phone cells and televisions have deviated students’ attention. After school students rush to the neighboring centers to watch movies. Unfortunately, those movies watched outside the family are more often not constructive. This is the case of one head teacher who was explicit on this issue:

I recently had a case of a form three female student who, after school, was engaged in visiting betting houses projecting pornographic movies. Parents and school were not aware of that till she got pregnant. Such issues are commonly shared among head teachers of free day secondary schools. This is to say that what adolescent students do between home and school are not controlled (Female head teacher, April 30, 2019).

The study findings affirmed that social media changed students’ discipline and behaviors leading to prostitution and early pregnancies especially in day schools where students interact more with external environment. Thus quality education cannot be attained in such circumstances. This is consistent with Salifu (2012) who claims that the presence of entertainment places around schools exerts an influence on the quality of education.

The study participants were of the opinion that the youth go to school with the motivation of getting jobs, money and leading better life. Table 6 indicates 67.7% of teachers, 50% of head teachers and 50% of DEOs who argued that lack of job discourage learners. When students interact with jobless peers who completed school, their first motivation becomes problematic. A teacher noted this:

My boy student often says: I am not studying only for knowing but for earning living. Unfortunately, my two friends graduated in college since 5years ago but they are jobless. They even found those who did not go to school far ahead in other businesses. Why then should I struggle (Male teacher, April 29, 2019).

The researcher found this factor not only related to free education policy but probably shared with other schools also. Unemployment of many educated people discourages learners. The findings suggested that if the government increased access to education it should also facilitate employment opportunities for graduates. These results concurred with Safari (2016) that fake employment opportunities and perceived unemployment reduce students’ interests in learning.

From the same table, teachers (50%), head teachers (62.5%) and DEOs (100%) made clear that poor understanding and use of English among students affected quality education achievement. Since Rwandan community share one language there is no use of English out of classroom. This affected students as one DEO noted that:

Learners struggle to learn in foreign language while they are better in Kinyarwanda. When I consider students' difficulties in English, I ask myself why we shouldn't teach them in the language they understand better. But this might also present others limitations (Female DEO, May 20, 2019).

This was supported by a head teacher who added that it was almost impossible to hear any other language in the region. Speaking Kinyarwanda was not considered as bad but it did not help students who are to study in English. It can therefore be said that poor skills in instructional language was found to be setback to quality education. This is in line with what Banga (2016) said that lack of students' proficiency in instructional language limits their learning process.

Lastly but not least, lack of electricity connections was reported by few teachers (26: 27.1%) and head teachers (2: 25%) as a factor which affected learning. Findings revealed that free education policy lead establishment of many schools, even in the farthest villages. However, some of those villages including their schools lack electrical lines. A school principal brought out the issue in this way:

We are handicapped by lack of electricity. The nearest center that can supply is approximately at 15kilometers from the school. Connecting the school from the center becomes very expensive. Hence we cannot neither have computers nor benefit from the available online resources (Male head teacher, May 3, 2019).

This head teacher said that there some books only available online at the Ministry of Education website. However, without electricity and internet, access to the website becomes limited unless they go to Huye city. Such schools could not even purchase or use computers. It can therefore be seen that rural day secondary schools need electricity supply in order to access some teaching materials.

#### 4.4 Challenges Faced by the Government in Providing Quality Education

The respondents pointed out challenges faced by the government in providing quality education. Their views are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7: Government's Challenges for Quality Education**

Challenges	Teachers		Head Teachers		DEOs	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Insufficient budget	92	95.8	7	87.5	2	100
Translation of textbooks in English	81	84.3	3	37.5	1	50
High students population	79	82.2	8	100	2	100
Instability of education system	64	66.6	6	75	-	-
Low level of parents' participation	45	46.9	7	87.5	2	100
Low teachers' experience in CBC	33	34.3	4	50	2	100
Lack of educational advisors	28	29.1	2	25	-	-

The majority of teachers (95.8%), head teachers (87.5%) and DEOs (100%) expressed that the government' budget is insufficient and thus national budget for education was also low. One DEO affirmed the view of teachers and head teachers in this way:

National budget is limited and shared in various sectors hence the share dedicated to education is also small. This alone cannot allow the government to provide all schools with needed materials for quality education (Male DEO, May 27, 2019).

In support of this, one head teacher explained that:

The government is aware of low teachers' salary but the budget's situation dictates them what to do. In fact we are many teachers nationwide that even a small per cent increase in salary involves high change in education budget (Female head teacher, May 15, 2019).

Respondents asserted that budget challenges affected the provision of adequate salaries, school infrastructure, equipment and capitation grants. The government had good will to provide quality education to its citizens but low economic level hindered them from hitting the targets. Findings were in line with Muwagga (2013) that free education strategy was accompanied by poor public funds and inadequate facilities.

Statistics in Table 7 show another challenge of textbooks' translation. The study results revealed that the initial stage of changing instructional language (from French to English) was challenging. Books and materials were available in French. The government undertook a big task of translating them and purchasing new ones from neighboring Anglophone countries. However, more books are needed as one head teacher said:

In 2009-2010 I could not believe that English will be used in education since there were no books. Now, I admire the government efforts to avail reading materials in English. But still, books translated in students' local context are lacking (Male head teacher, April 26, 2019).

Teachers (84.3%) also were of the opinion that translation of teaching materials was expensive in terms of money, translators' expertise and time; hence there was scarcity of books. A DEO added that the process of producing only one set book is long but so far many books were produced and more others were to be out soon. From the findings it is clear that the government need to carry on the work of producing textbooks reflecting students' reality and context. Results were in line with Ghati's (2013) findings which state that adequacy and efficacy of teaching and learning resources determines the quality of education that schools provides to learners.

Table 17 shows 82.2% teachers, 100% principals and 100% DEOs who expressed that students' population was high. The number of school aged children does not match with available resources for education. The government therefore finds it difficult to deliver good quality as desired. Here is what a DEO said in support of this idea:

Schools are like families! When you have many children something changes in the way you care for individual needs. It is the same case with the government when there are many citizens who need education (Female DEO, May 20, 2019).

This assertion suggested to the study that high population in the study area exerted an influence on quality education in the region. Bentaouet (2006) confirmed that high students' enrolment affects quality education. The study would propose parents' education on family planning.

Moreover, instability of education system was reported by teachers (66.6%) and head teachers (75%) who brought out the issue of regular changes occurring in education sector. Head teachers said that frequent changes in education disturbed a lot but one of the teachers wrote it clearly that every new Minister comes with new changes before the existing ones take roots. These challenges affect not only teachers but also students. Responses spelt out that in a short time there were change in education officials, change in language, and change in curriculum which in return affect education outcomes. The study discouraged major simultaneous changes in education in order to avoid their strong impact on quality education.

Data in Table 7 show again that participants, mostly head teachers (87.5%) and DEOs (100%) said that the government met difficulties in winning parents' collaboration, especially in feeding program. A school principal noted that the government introduced school feeding program in day secondary schools hoping that parents will significantly collaborate. However, the reality suggests that parents' participation seems to have failed. A DEO added that feeding program cannot be successful without parents' participation. Some parents are very poor but others just don't react while they are not poor. Their attitudes had to be changed. The findings disclosed that there is no support for parents from the government. This is in line with Rumberger (2009) that in the United States of America, absence of parents' interest in their children's education impacted quality education. Therefore, sensitization of parents may promote quality education.

Other respondents reported low teachers' experience in CBC implementation. Competence-Based Curriculum was newly adopted in Rwandan education. The study found out that fewer but considerable number of teachers (34.3%), head teachers (50%) and all DEOs were of the opinion that teachers lack experience and understanding of CBC implementation. One head teacher shared that:

Some teachers seem to be confused about their role in CBC. They think that CBC reduced their work. Others even though they will no longer prepare notes for learners since students themselves have to research and generate knowledge. It is not true (Female head teacher, May 6, 2019).

Other respondents revealed to the research that teachers were used to Knowledge - Based Curriculum. Thus they continue to teach as they were used to do. The study therefore found that training on the new curriculum would be helpful in improving quality teaching and learning.

Finally, the respondents signaled the lack of educational advisors. Very few respondents that are 29% teachers and 25% head teachers reported lack of enough and competent specialists in education to advise the sector. This is the case of one head teacher when saying this "In the midst of changes and innovations education needs advisors to accompany those changes. Hopefully the top managers will do something". Similarly teachers' responses also reflected the felt need of advisors mainly at the school level but also at the level of educational planners. The study finding showed that provision of competent advisors would lead to better outcomes.

#### **4.5 Existing Government Mechanisms Which Promote Quality Education**

The researcher intended to find out whether there existed the government's measures to promote quality education. This section answers research question four on what the government has done to enhance quality education in free day secondary schools. Their responses are as per Table 8



**Table 8: Government Measures to Promote Quality Education**

Government Measures	Teachers		H. Teachers		DEOs	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Building new infrastructure for free education	96	100	8	100	2	100
Provision of teaching materials	96	100	8	100	2	100
Increased teacher' salary by10%	96	100	8	100	2	100
Recruitment of new teachers for FDSS	95	98.9	8	100	2	100
Financing all FDSS	90	93.7	8	100	2	100
Training teachers in English and CBC	77	80.2	6	75	2	100
Introduction of feeding program in FDSS	66	68.7	4	50	2	100
Opening teachers' SACCO	51	53.1	3	37.5	1	50
Appointment of auditors and inspectors	32	33.3	5	62.5	2	100
Decentralization of education services	0	0	7	87.5	2	100

According to Table 8, all the teachers (100%), head teachers (100%) and DEOs (100%) affirmed that for free education to take place, the government had built infrastructure like establishing new schools and expanding the existing ones. It also provided teaching materials (such as books and computers for e-resources) and increased teachers' salary by 10%. In addition, 98.9% teachers and 100% head teachers and DEOs confirmed that the government recruited new teachers in free day secondary schools; while 100% principals and DEOs plus 93.7% teachers said that free education schools are financed by the government.

From the same table, teachers' training in English and CBC were done. This was reported by 80.2% teachers, 75% head teachers and 100% DEOs. This was organized due to the changes which occurred in the language of instruction and educational curriculum. 100% of DEOs, 68.7% of teachers and 50% of head teachers said that feeding program was introduced to improve students' attention and participation in classroom, especially poor and less privileged ones. However, they added that there were many steps to make for it to operate successfully.

At the same time, 53% of teachers, 37.5% of principals and 50% of DEOs were of the opinion that the government created teachers' Saving and Credit Cooperative (SACCO). This was to the effect that low teachers' salary would be supplemented by this cooperative's loans and permits them to initiate some projects for their development. Furthermore, 33.3% of teachers, 62.5% of head teachers and 100% of DEOs revealed that school auditors and inspectors were appointed for quality control in terms of financial utilization and instructional pedagogy. Finally, decentralization of education services was the exception of head teachers (87.5%) and DEOs (100%) only. They argued that, since the government had availed all education services at district level, their presence at the schools and offices was improved.

#### **4.6 Suggestion of Alternative Strategies for Quality Education Improvement**

In view of the FDSS's challenges, participants suggested ways by which quality education could be improved. Their views are summarized in Table 9.

**Table 9: Suggestions for Improving Quality Education**

Suggested strategies	Teachers		Head Teachers		DEOs	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
Parents' sensitization	96	100	8	100	2	100
Provision of laboratories and dining rooms	91	94.7	7	87.5	-	-
Add more CBC resources (books)	91	94.7	8	100	2	100
Equipping schools with enough desks	84	87.5	5	62.5	-	-
Timely release of funds	77	80.2	8	100	2	100
Teachers salary to be increased	77	80.2	5	62.5	2	100
More teachers' training on CBC	72	75	6	75	2	100
Providing teachers' accommodation	68	70.8	1	12.5	1	50
Friendly supervision	61	63.5	-	-	-	-
Education on family relations' repair	55	57.2	8	100	2	100
Feeding funds to be increased	53	55.2	8	100	2	100
Automatic promotion to be stopped	49	51	8	100	2	100
Counseling services to be established	37	38.5	7	87.5	-	-
Involving teachers in decision making	30	31.2	4	50	-	-
Collaboration with school community	25	26	8	100	2	100
Safeguard the stability of the system	18	18.7	3	37.5	-	-

Unanimity of participants (100%) complained that parents are not cooperating in education of their children. Thus they suggested that parents' sensitization campaigns should be organized and promote their active participation. Participants said that parents' responsibility would be essential in creating children's interest in education, discipline and raising feeding funds. Again, provision of infrastructure such as laboratories and dining rooms were suggested by 94.7% of teachers and 87.5% of head teachers. However, DEOs did not say anything about it. Furthermore, there was lack of CBC textbooks and classroom's desks in day schools which pushed participants to propose their number to be increased.

On the issues of funds insufficiency, delays and low salaries; participants proposed that the government should release those funds on time i.e. beginning of every trimester; and that teachers' salary should be increased to the cost of life in Rwanda and to the level of other government workers. This was said by 80.2 % teachers, 81.2 % head teachers and all the DEOs. Concerning insufficient feeding funds, it was also suggested by 55% of teachers and all principals and DEO as well that this program should be strengthened by increasing the amount from 56frw to 150frw per child. Being aware of low country's economy, participants thought that it would be good if the government could attract NGOs to invest in education as the basis of development.

More teachers' training on the implementation of Competence-Based Curriculum was pointed out by 75% of teachers and head teachers, as well as 100% of district education officers. Teachers even wished educational trips to learn from those who implemented CBC before. In addition, provision of teachers' accommodations was mostly suggested by teachers (70.8%). Some teachers were from far away from schools, others were from different provinces. Nearby accommodations therefore would help them to be more effective in preparation for teaching.

Furthermore, only teacher respondents (63.5%) proposed friendly supervision that would not check only documents but mostly advice teachers on the best ways to teach.

For improving quality of education, it was said by teachers (57.2%), head teachers (100%) and DEOs (100%) that there is need for educating the community on the family relations. Much was to be done on conflict management and family relations' repair. They pointed out that if the government and may be the churches could invest in family education; poor family background would have less influence on children's education. Respondents again suggested that the automatic promotion strategy should be stop. Students' promotion to the next level should be guided by their performance.

In regard to emotional, behavioral and moral issues, teachers (38.5%) and head teachers (87.5%) proposed provision of school counselors. Other study participants were of the opinion that teachers should be consulted and involved in decision making. This was affirmed by 31.2% of teachers and 50% of head teachers. In addition, all principals, district officers and few teachers (26%) saw that collaboration with school community could improve quality education. Local authorities should work hand in hand with schools in reducing drug abuse and trafficking. Finally, very few teachers (18.7%) and few head teachers (37.5%) suggested that establishing a solid education system and safeguarding its stability could ensure qualitative education and better educational outcomes. For instance, appointment of education officers for a long term mandate can allow them to implement and evaluate their initiatives. This will avoid regular changes and allow stability and efficacy of education system.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

Based on the study findings, the following conclusions were arrived at:

Firstly, free education exerted a negative impact on quality education. Factors leading to poor quality in different schools are similar in nature such as high teacher-student ratio, inadequate physical facilities, lack of teaching materials, lack of parents' involvement and insufficient funds from both government and parents. Secondly, free day schools have allowed students' direct interaction with outside environment on their way home. This has distracted them and affected their behaviors as well as their focus on school. In some cases deviant behaviors even led to prostitution and early pregnancies.

Thirdly, free education has increased access to secondary education enrolment and completion. However quality performance was not achieved. Although many students passed through the system, very few got better grades that could allow them to enroll in the colleges and universities. Generally, teachers and head teachers were not happy with the students' achievements in day secondary schools because secondary certificate only cannot lead them to better future.

Fourthly, head teachers in day secondary schools have got heavy administrative duties that made it difficult to properly monitor teachers' work through supervision. However, the study appreciated that, from the district and other top management levels, schools were visited and assessed regularly even though teachers considered these visits as unfriendly and demotivating. Therefore, there was need for local supervision within the schools and friendly supervision from outside inspectors.

Fifthly, there were no laboratories in FDSS while students' textbooks and library equipment were limited. Hence day schools were in urgent need of these facilities. In addition, sport facilities were found to be also scarce. Sixthly, the study concluded that there was an appreciable use of interactive methods such as group discussion, demonstration and question-

answer. Nonetheless, lecture method is also still used in teaching CBC. The need for teachers' training in more interactive methods was felt.

Seventhly, parents' participation in quality education was poor. They wrongly understood the concept of free education and therefore abandoned their responsibilities leaving them to the government and teachers. In addition, the surrounding environment was found to affect students' learning. For instance, long distances affected punctuality and attendance while remote areas prevented schools from accessing electricity. Lastly, the study concluded that the government was aware of the challenges and has made some efforts, but not sufficient to enhance quality education.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

Following the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher made these recommendations for more quality education improvement:

- i. The government should construct more classrooms for day schools and provide enough desks so that classroom congestion and teacher-student ratio are reduced. It would be better if this ratio could reach 1:40 and if only 2 students could share one desk. Again, it should be better to revise the staffing policy by reducing teachers' teaching hours per week and recruiting more teachers.
- ii. The study recommended the government to equip libraries with enough students' textbooks, charts and maps in order to enhance qualitative teaching in FDSS. In addition, textbooks should reflect the local reality and context of the learners.
- iii. Various means should be used by the government to improve teachers' motivation. For instance, giving them fair salaries in regard to other government employees, rewarding their efforts especially the best performers, and seek teachers' opinion before some decisions are made mainly those affecting their work.
- iv. The researcher proposed the government to increase funds for education sector and release them timely that is at the beginning of every trimester. In order to get these funds, the government might make investors and donors interested in education as basis for national and sustainable development.
- v. The study recommended the education officials to set out and explain clearly to the population the meaning they put under 'Free Education' and what contribution they expect from parents. This would remove some ambiguities and misunderstandings between government and parents.
- vi. Head teachers and teachers were recommended to work hard and explore all the possible ways to increase the students' grades in national examinations. This would open up further educational opportunities and better future of their students. For example, organizing local competitive tests with boarding and other day schools can prepare them for writing successfully national exams.
- vii. Since there are no laboratories in day schools, the study recommends them to collaborate with boarding schools and explore the possibility of taking students in their laboratories for practicals. However, this proposition does not prevent the researcher to recommend the government to provide FDSS with laboratories.
- viii. The schools and education officers should promote the importance of sports in enhancing quality education. This would lead to provision and utilization of sports facilities in day secondary schools.
- ix. The whole community surrounding the schools (parents, teachers, local authorities, and community residents at large) should together come up with mechanisms that make the neighborhood understand their participation in enhancing students' discipline. For instance, the

community can help to redirect students who deviate on the way to or from school and, instead, go to market, watch films or engage in visiting prostitution places.

x. The study revealed the urgency of guidance and counseling departments in day secondary schools in order to improve students' emotional and psychological wellness. The researcher recommended the government to establish these departments in schools. For immediate action, teaching staff empowerment in counseling skills must be undertaken for having professionals capable of handling some students' problems. In addition, parents should also be equipped with knowledge about adolescents' education since the follow up of their behaviors is also done at home.

xi. Since the study found many day schools having different sections (nursery, primary and secondary), it recommended that there should be 2 separate head teachers that is one head teachers for nursery and primary section and another head teacher for secondary section. This would create more time for qualitative school administration and supervision.

xii. The researcher recommended that day schools without electricity and computer supplies should be facilitated to access them and benefit from the available online resources.

xiii. Since students had no opportunities to speak English outside, the study recommends schools to dedicate some days to English speaking in schools for both students and staff. This would offer opportunities to improve skills in the instructional language.

xiv. Finally, the study recommended that the government should make efforts to prepare and establish a well-structured and reflected on education system that would resist major changes and enhance stability.

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