
DEBATES AND LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF REAL QUALITY PRIMARY SCHOOL IN KISORO DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The major objective of this study lied in finding out whether there was a relationship between Debates and Learning at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro District. Other objectives included: To find out the extent of Debate practice at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro District and to find out the level of learning at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro district.

The study adopted a descriptive and observational research design and simple random probability sampling technique were used to obtain a sample size 80 respondents of from Kisoro Municipality using solvins formula. The researcher concluded that debates have a strong positive correlation with learning ($r = 0.994$ at 0.01 level of significance) and therefore debates should be encouraged in schools because they promote active independent thinking of learners. The researcher recommends that teachers should include time for debate activities on school time table so as to enable learners develop self-confidence, critically think, develop their language speaking skills and be motivated towards learning in schools. The researcher also recommends community members including parents to nurture their children well and encourage them to participate in debate activities in schools.

Key words: *debates and learning*

Background of the study

According to Kennedy (2007), debate refers to a competition in which teams of people, often students, discuss a subject and the team that is judged to make the best arguments wins. Oros

(2007) Defines debate as to argue or discuss an issue like as in a legislative or public assembly. A debate is a kind of respectful, well-reasoned argument over opposing points of view, although tensions can run high and voices can raise (Eison, 1991). The term debate can also be defined as a formal discussion of the opposing sides of a specific subject or a formal contest of argument (Lundquist, 2000).

According to the study conducted by Kennedy (2007) in Indonesia, He stated that students learn in diverse ways and that there is therefore a need in Higher Education to provide a variety of instructional strategies and forms of assessment. For academics such as Oros (2007) and Jackson (2009), debates can be embedded in module teaching. Oros (2007) says debates can be integrated into course design and assessment and introduced to students from the beginning of a module. For these academics, debates can be used to complement other teaching strategies and provide a variety of teaching styles to keep students actively engaged in content.

The Kenyan Government prioritizes education as a fundamental human right, viewing it as key to national development. It has a high national profile and the government is aware of the many challenges it faces in raising the quality of education across the country in order to improve student attainment and develop the capabilities of its young population. With 39% of the total population in Kenya under 14 years of age (UNESCO, 2011), ensuring good-quality education is one of the most urgent of national issues and in 2009 the Kenyan Government committed 17.2% of its total government expenditure to education.

Free and compulsory primary education between the ages of 6 and 13 years in Kenya was introduced in 2003. This caused the net enrolment rate to increase from 62% in 2002 to 83% in 2009 (UNESCO, 2011). However, such success masks inconsistent enrolment rates between regions across the country. Additionally, while pupil enrolment increased by 21%, it has had a negative impact on pupil–teacher ratios. Average pupil– teacher ratio in primary schools increased

from 39.5:1 in 2005 to 47:1 in 2009 (UNESCO, 2005, 2011). The impact of this is felt particularly in state sector schools. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was accompanied by a marked increase in the proportion of children in private primary education from 3.4% in 2003 to 9.2% in 2007.

Statement of the problem

In Kisoro district, debates are not encouraged in the learning process of the students which has made the learners to fail language subjects like English and Swahili, decline in self-confidence of the learners and making learners not so argumentative, and this made the researcher to get interested in making the public aware of the use of debates in learning. Therefore, the researcher wanted to find out the relationship between Debates and Learning at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro district in order to fill that gap which is missing.

Specific objectives

- 1. To find out the extent of Debate practice at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro District.*
- 2. To find out the level of learning at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro district.*
- 3. To find out the relationship between Debates and Learning at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro District.*

Research questions

- 1. What is the extent of Debate practice at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro District?*
- 2. What is the level of Learning at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro District?*
- 3. What is the relationship between debates and learning at Real Quality Primary School in*

Kisoro district?

Methodology

Research design

Kumar (2005) defines a research design as a plan, structure, and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions or problems.

The study employed a descriptive research design and was used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Anastas and Jeane W, 1999). The researcher used this design to obtain and describe answers to some research questions in order to collect a more in-depth data from the field.

Study population

This is the aggregation of elements from which sample is actually selected (Babbie, 2004). The study population for the study were 20 parents, 42 students, 16 teachers, Head teacher and a district Education officer of Kisoro district. These were correlated with Slovenes formula of sample size determination to obtain a sample population of 80 respondents from a target population of 100 elements of interest for this study.

Sampling procedures

Sampling procedure refers to choosing part of a population to use to test hypotheses about the entire population (Jowin, 2003). The procedures included simple random sampling and purposive sampling and will be used to select respondents in the study.

Sample size

A sample is a small subset of the total population (George & Mallery, 2003).

The study sample comprised of 80 respondents out of 100 of the total population where 20 respondents were parents, 42 respondents were students, 16 respondents were teachers, Head teacher and a district Education officer of Kisoro district, making a total number of

respondents 80 for the study.

Sampling techniques

According to James M.J. (2008), sampling technique refers to the name or other identification of the specific process by which entities of the sample have been selected.

The researcher employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to enable him collect a more reliable data from the field as explained below:

Simple random sampling

Simple random sampling is a method of sample selection which gives each possible combination an equal probability of being picked up and each item in the entire population to have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Kothari, 2014)

In this case each, an individual was chosen entirely by chance and each member of the population had an equal chance, or probability of being selected (Ben-Shlomo Y., et al, 2013). The researcher used this technique by giving a number to each individual in a target population and then use a table of random numbers to decide which individuals to include. From a total population of 100, the researcher used this technique to sample parents, students and teachers in the study area.

Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling technique was used to select units into the sample which includes DEO and a district environment officer. This technique is based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. The researcher used this technique because it is very useful in situations when you need to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the main concern.

Purposive sampling is less costly, more readily accessible, more convenient and select only those individuals that are relevant to research design. Besides this, there is no way to ensure that the

sample is truly representative of the population, and more emphasis is placed on the ability of the researcher to assess the elements of the population.

Data collection methods

This study used primary data to determine the relationship between variables. Primary data collection methods are mixed and they include: questionnaires and interviews as discussed below:

Questionnaire method

A questionnaire is a data collection tool which consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a defined order on a form or set of forms which are used by the researcher in collection of data from the field (Goode & Hatt, 2003). The researcher also used this method to collect a more meaningful data from respondents since questionnaires were self-administered to the respondents and assistance was supplied to the respondents where they had not understood.

Interviewing method

In this method, informed members were selected to inform the researcher about specific issues regarding the study. The instrument employed a key informative guide which includes questions on the specific objectives of the study. This helped in capturing of qualitative information needed in this study.

Data analysis

The researcher analyzed and interpreted quantitative data by using statistical package for social science (SPSS) program to compute the percentages, frequency and tabulation of responses and both use of quantitative and qualitative types of data. Data was edited to identify and eliminate errors made by respondents. Coding was then done to translate question responses into specific categories. Presentation was done on tables, figures and charts. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to aid in the analysis of data.

RESULTS

Response rate

Questionnaire return rate

All the 74 questionnaires were given out, 50 were returned, thus representing 68% response. The study was considered good because according to Peil (1995), questionnaire return rate above 50% is considered good for a study.

Interview response

The researcher interviewed individuals in different ways whereby at time he would meet person per person or at times meet groups of individuals in different interval as it would require appointments with respondents to get for you the time.

Personal information of respondents

Information regarding to the personal background of the respondents included their age, gender, marital status, occupation, and education level.

Age of the respondents

Information regarding the age of the respondents was added to questionnaires during the piloting process. The following information regarding the ages of the respondents was analyzed using SPSS Software and presented in form of grouped data as shown in the table 1

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Frequency			Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-10	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	10-20	4	8.0	8.0	16.0
	20-30	3	6.0	6.0	22.0
	30-40	13	26.0	26.0	48.0
	40-50	16	32.0	32.0	80.0
	50+	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Therefore, from the mean (4.2600) it was deduced that most of the respondents who participated in the study were from a mature group i.e., were within the age range of 40-50 years with 32.0% and this was because such people within that age group of 40-50 years can reason critically and debate well with responsible arguments. From this, it was then deduced that the validity and reliability of the obtained information were due to the mature minds which were studied. Also, from the table 4.2.1, the researcher found out that 8.0% of the respondents were aged between 0-10 years, 8.0% of the respondents in Kisoro Municipality were aged between 10-20years, 26.0% of the respondents were aged between 30-40years and 6.0% were aged between 20-30years and 20.0% were aged 50 years and above. The range was 5.00 and Std. Deviation was 1.48200.

Gender of Respondents

The study investigated the gender of the respondents and the findings were as shown in the table 2

Table 2: Gender of respondents

Frequency			Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	24	48.0	48.0	48.0
	Female	26	52.0	52.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

From table 2, it was found out that, majority of the respondents were females with 52.0% compared to males with 48.0%.

Occupation of the respondents

Information regarding the occupation of the respondents in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District was collected and presented in table 3

Table 3: Occupation of respondents

Frequency			Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Farmer	28	56.0	56.0	56.0

Civil servant	12	24.0	24.0	80.0
Trader	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The bigger percentage of the respondents lied in farming (56.0%), 24.0 were Civil Servants and followed by Traders (20.0%).

Marital status

Information regarding the marital status of the respondents in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District was collected and presented in table 4

Table 4: Marital status of respondents

MARITAL STATUS

Frequency		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	10	20.0	20.0
	Married	29	58.0	78.0
	Divorced	11	22.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	

From table 4, it was found out that, majority of the respondents were married with 58.0%, 20.0% of the respondents were singles and only 22.0% had divorced.

Educational level of the respondents

Information regarding the academic background of respondents in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District was obtained and tabulated as shown in table 5

Table 5: Educational background of the respondents

EDUCATION LEVEL

Frequency		Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary and below	21	42.0	42.0
	O level	9	18.0	60.0
	A level	5	10.0	70.0

Certificate	12	24.0	24.0	94.0
None	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

From table 5, it was found out in an analysis of interviews and questionnaire that majority of the respondents had only completed their primary level of education (42.0%) and never continued with their further studies, 18.0% had completed O level of education, 10.0% had completed their A' Level of education, 24.0% had finished their certificate level of education and 6.0% had not attended any level of education in their lives. From the statistics, it's indicating that the education of Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District is lacking and needing

The extent of Debates practice at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro Municipality This Section describes the independent variable (Debates). The independent variable was addressed in Section B of the questionnaire for respondents.

Table 6: The extent of debates practice

EXTENT OF DEBATES PRACTICE

Valid	50
N	
Missing	0

Mean

2.6757

The extent of debates practice at real quality primary school in Kisoro district was analyzed and interpreted basing on the mean which was **2.6757**. The mean is low hence indicating the low extent of debates practice at real quality primary school. The low extent of debates practice at real quality primary school is attributed to low self-esteem and confidence among students, the tight studying

time table of students and lack of cooperation among schools to organize inter debate competitions in Kisoro district

Under this study objective, the researcher went ahead and presented the findings on the extent of debate practice on frequency tables and interpreted the findings using percentages as shown below.

Frequency			Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	large	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Medium	15	30.0	30.0	88.0
	Small	29	58.0	58.0	58.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The findings revealed that the extent of debate practice is small at Real Quality primary school. The extent of debate practice was found to be small because 58.0% of the study population agreed that the extent of debate practice was small and this was due to low efforts put into organizing debates by teachers, poor English language spoken by students, shortage of learning materials concerning literature, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem among students. 30.0% agreed that the extent of debate practice is at a medium extent and only 12.0% argued that the extent of debate practice is at a large extent. Under this research objective, the researcher went ahead to ask respondents the examples of subjects which involve debates and most respondents revealed that literature and language subjects like English.

The level of learning at Real Quality Primary School in Kisoro Municipality

This Section describes the dependent variable (Learning). The dependent variable was addressed in Section C of the questionnaire for respondents. Information regarding the level of real quality primary school in Kisoro district was tabulated in table 4.4 below.

Table 7: The level of learning

LEVEL OF LEARNING

Valid	50
N	
Missing	0

Mean**4.4768**

The level of learning at real quality primary school was analyzed and interpreted basing on the **mean** which was **4.4768**. The mean is very low hence indicating the low level of learning at real quality primary school. The low level of learning can be attributed to shortage of scholastic learning materials like text books, few classrooms, shortage of teachers and high population in the school.

Under this study objective, the researcher went ahead and presented the findings on the level of learning at real quality primary school on frequency tables and interpreted the findings using percentages as shown below

Frequency			Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Medium	10	20.0	20.0	46.0
	Low	27	54.0	54.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The level of learning was analyzed basing on mean which was **10.876**, the mean is low hence

indicating low level of learning. The responses of the level of learning were also analyzed basing on percentages where 54.0% of the respondents agreed that the level of learning among students at real quality primary school is low and this was because most students are always absent in class, some come late when lessons has already started and lack of learning materials to be used by

teachers while teaching learners, 20.0% argued that the level of learning among students at real quality primary school is at medium level and 26.0% revealed that the level of learning among students at real quality primary school is high.

Relationship between Debates and Learning at Real Quality Primary School

Table 8: Showing Pearson Correlation between Debates and Learning

Correlations

		Debates	Learning
Debates	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.994
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Learning	Pearson Correlation	.994	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Source: SPSS output page

Table 8 indicates that there is a very strong positive relationship between Debates and Learning at $r = 0.994$ and since the sig. value (.000) was far less than 0.01, which is the maximum level of significance required declaring a significant relationship between Debates and Learning, this implies that if the level of Debate practice is high, the level of Learning is also high and if the level of Debate practice is low, then the level of Learning is also low.

Conclusion of the findings

The researcher concluded that debates have a strong positive correlation with learning ($r = 0.994$ at 0.01 level of significance) and therefore debates should be encouraged in schools because they promote active independent thinking of learners.

Recommendations of the study

On the basis of the findings of this study and conclusions drawn, the following are the recommendations regarding the relationship between debates and learning at real quality primary school in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro district.

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