

**SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
LEARNING IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN  
NYARUGURU DISTRICT,  
RWANDA**

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A Thesis

Presented to the Department of  
Postgraduate Studies and Research  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Educational Management  
And Administration

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## DECLARATION (A)

"This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a Degree or any other academic award in any University or Institution of Learning".

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Name and Signature of Candidate

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Date

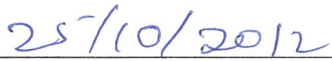
## DECLARATION (B)

"I/We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under my/our supervision".



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Dr. Irene Otindo



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Date

## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to my beloved wife and my children for their patience and understanding during the period of the study.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First of all the researcher give thanks to the almighty God for his mercy and grace granted to me during this time of my degree course and through this researcher project

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May God bless you all

## ABSTRACT

This study was set to find out the relationship between schools' environment and students' attitude towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district. It was guided by four specific objectives, that included determining the i) profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, education level, teaching experience, subjects taught and type of school; ii) determining the level of schools' environment; iii) the degree of students' attitudes towards learning and iv) the relationship between schools' environment and students' attitudes towards learning. The researcher employed descriptive correlational strategies, questionnaires were used of 4-likert scale that is 4:-strongly agree, 3:-agree, 2:-disagree and 1:-strongly disagree. The finding revealed that level of school environment and student's attitude of selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District was poor. Pearson's correlation co-efficient for school environment and students' attitudes towards learning  $r = 0.672$  and positive, having a sig value = 0.000) which is less than 0.005. There was positive significant relationship between school environment and students' attitudes towards learning. Therefore the researcher recommended that there is need to improve on the school environment in order to uplift the students' attitudes towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district Rwanda.

Arts subjects should still be encouraged in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district such that students can consider them as science subjects since there also very important, there is need to uplift the competencies of teachers in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district since most of the teachers were found to be degree holders so they need to upgrade and go for further studies.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

#### Background of the Study

A well-coordinated interaction among different actors participating in a school system is essential for delivery of a positive school environment. To facilitate such a process, a school needs mechanisms to enhance collaboration, and harmonise seemingly incompatible interests. Amason (1996), attitude is categorised into cognitive, affective and psychomotor affective which enhance performance, and affective attitude, which reduces performance and satisfaction. It is desirable that attitude remains constructive, but in practice cognitive debates often become affective (Di Paola and Hoy, 2001). Nonetheless, student's attitudes towards learning is within certain limits is desirable and the potential that permeates all human relations. Student' attitude can lead to school health and growth, or destruction depending on how it is managed (Burns, 1978; Blake and Mouton, 1964; Perrow, 1986, Bisno, 1988; Henkin et al, 2000; Johnson, 1996). In educational institutions, effective management depends on collaborative teamwork among teachers, administrators, parents and students. However, collaborative decision-making in schools is often characterised by conflict caused by diversity of interests of stakeholders (Johnson and Scollay, 2001; Henkin et al, 2000; Dearlove, 1995).

School environment is one of the factors that enhance school success and effectiveness (Pashiardis, 2000; Norton, 1984; Lezotte, 1992). Pashiardis (2000) defined school environment as the collective personality of a school; the overall atmosphere that one senses on entering the school. A positive school environment is one where there is communication and collaboration among participants (administrators, teachers and students) in reaching the goals of the school and where the school positively influences the behaviour of students and staff.

Roueche and Baker (1986) believe that the principal is the kingpin in establishing that environment, maintaining order, direction and coherence among all participants. Over the last seven years (2001 to 2007), schools in Rwanda have witnessed an increasing frequency in students' strikes against school administration (Akweteireho, 2001; Sidney 2001; Bifubyeka 2001, Thawite and Kanyambu, 2001; Basiime 2002, Mambule 2002; Maseruka, 2001; Kanyambu, 2001). Some of the strikes have resulted in destruction of property and injuries to school administrators. The strikes have been attributed to undisciplined students, academically weak students, disgruntled teachers, poor feeding and poor management by headteachers. Parents felt that poor administration and lack of accountability was responsible for increasing strikes in schools. The Ministry of Education concluded that although strikes were not the solution, they were an eye opener that there is a problem with school management. Head teachers have attributed the rising number of strikes to the ban on corporal punishment, while others have argued that disgruntled teachers incite students to strike. To resolve the strike problem, in October 2001 the Ministry of Education and Sports established a desk to handle student grievances (Erem, 2001). The minister warned that students who destroy property in the name of striking would be dismissed and head teachers who cause strikes through repressive and dictatorial administration would face disciplinary action.

The occurrence of strikes in a school environment could be an indicator that students, and perhaps teachers, are not satisfied with the school environment. Since the headteacher is a king pin in establishing the school environment (Roueche and Baker, 1986), investigating the factors affecting students attitudes towards learning may explain why students are disgruntled with the school situation.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Increased occurrence of violent strikes in schools in Uganda is an indicator that students, and perhaps other participants in the school system, are not satisfied with the school environment. The measures applied by various levels of authority to resolve the school strikes and establish a positive school environment have not investigated the strategies employed by school administrators. Yet research in other countries has shown that whether conflict manifests itself as constructive or destructive depends on how managers conceive and handle conflict (Burns, 1978; Coser, 1956; Putman, 1997; Johnson et al 1996, Dipaola and Hoy, 2001). Thus, it is necessary to examine whether the negative attitudes towards school are responsible for teacher and student dissatisfaction with the school environment.

Although, studies in developed countries have shown positive relationship between physical facilities, poor teacher students' relationship, lack materials to use of collaboration and student and teacher satisfaction with the school environment, their contexts differ markedly from the Rwandan context in many ways including culture, low self esteem, levels of education, and participation of various stakeholders in the decision making process in the schools and colleges (Perrow, C. 1986). In this study, the researcher intends how the school environment affects students' attitude towards learning.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between, school environment and students attitudes towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District, Rwanda.

## Research Objectives

**General:** This study was to determine the correlation between school environment and students' attitude towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District.

**Specific:** To be sought further in this study were as follows:

- (i) To determine the profile of respondents in relation to age, gender and experience, subject taught qualification and nature of the school.
- (ii) To determine the level of school environment in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District.
- (iii) To determine the degree of student's attitude towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District
- (iv) To establish the relationship between the level of school environment and degree of students' attitudes towards learning.

## Research Questions

- i. What are the profile of respondents in relation to age, gender and experience, subject taught, qualification and nature of the school?
- ii. What is the level of school environment in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District?
- iii. What is the degree of student' attitude towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District?
- iv. What is the relationship between school environment and students' attitudes towards learning?

## Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the level of school environment and degree of students' attitudes towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District

## **Scope**

### **Geographical scope**

The study was carried out in the selected secondary schools of Nyaruguru District. Nyaruguru is a district (akarere) in Southern Province, Rwanda. Its capital is Kibeho, a pilgrimage site of the Catholic Church. The district is the most southerly in Rwanda, lying between the cities of Butare and Cyangugu and along the Burundian border.

### **Content scope**

The study investigated the relationship between school environment (Independent variable) in terms of physical, social and psychological and students' attitudes towards learning (dependent variable).

### **Theoretical Scope**

This study was based on social learning theory of learning by Bandura (1969) will be proved or disproved in this study.

### **Time scope**

The expected time to conduct the study was three months from May-September 2012. The activities to be carried out during this period include: distribution of research questionnaires, collection of data from field (counties chief courts) and analysis, report writing and presenting of the thesis to KIU for approval.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will benefit the following disciplines:

The study would be useful to the people of Nyaruguru District as a **community**, also useful to NGO's such as basic needs and basic human rights,

women's and children's to understand and acknowledge the cause and impact of poverty in students academic performance in Schools in Nyaruguru District.

To the **school administrators** the findings of the study will be useful to them by providing the conducive environment that can embark on student's attitude towards learning.

More so the study would be useful to **other researchers**, in that would make them to understand on the existing and current problems of poverty and its detrimental effects. In addition, to policy makers (politicians) especially, the ministry of gender and social development. At the same time, the study would enable them to come up with more appropriate solution for supporting the children especially to overcome the impacts of poverty on academic performance.

The study would make the **researcher** get the possible solutions for the particular increase in the cases of school dropouts among the affected children, and by designing appropriate methodologies necessary to support them. It would be useful in a way that it would open the minds of the children on what to follow; this is whereby individuals would be able to share out ideas on how to curb the issue of poverty.

It would be helpful to **learners** by improving their attitude towards learning hence better performance.

It would incorporate a substantial further research in areas of children **management** and the eventual understanding of the behavioral characteristics of the children would form a basis for further ways of managing the children. The study would act as a derivative for a qualitative research and it would be a consultative component for the scholars who wish to enhance their careers in the areas of children and the young people.

## **Operational Definitions of Key Terms**

The following terms have been defined in the context of this research;



**Profile of respondents:** this is the bio data of people who have participated in research.

**Students Attitudes-** the way students feel about learning in terms of punishments like strikes, fetching water, digging aunt hills, slashing of the compound.

**School environment** – Refers to the conducive place that impact learning.

**Physical environment** - refers to the part of the human environment that includes purely physical factors (as soil, climate, water supply, clean toilets, classes and materials like text books, laboratory equipments).

**Psychological environment** - refers to the mind's ability to, consciously or unconsciously, adjust and relate the body to its social environment.

**Social environment** -refers to the immediate physical and social setting in which people live or in which something happens or develops.

**Learning** – refers to the process of acquiring knowledge and skills.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Concepts, Opinions, Ideas from Authors/ Experts**

##### **School Environment**

According to Millward,(2005) defines school environment as "the school setting relating to the physical plant, the fairness and adequacy of disciplinary procedures, the academic environment, and student health, including the available physical and mental health supports and services, as supported by relevant research and an assessment of validity".

School environment refers to those school-level variables that relate directly to the school environment teachers, curriculum coordinators, or principals. & also reflect policies created at the school, district, or community level that impact the entire school faculty, parents, and students (Moran, 1992).

Hoffman (1996) defines a school environment as "intellectual, social, physical, conditions within or exogenous within a school that influence the learning situation".

##### **Student Attitude**

William (2000) defines student attitude as "a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards learning. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, and responses to challenges, incentives, and rewards (together called stimuli). Four major components of attitude are Affective: emotions or feelings. Cognitive: belief or opinions held consciously. Conative: inclination for action. Evaluative: positive or negative response to stimuli.

It appears that attitudes are not quantifiable. They are psychological constructs, and therefore they can only be detected by indirect

methods. Attitudes manifest themselves in different ways. Their manifestations are linked to concepts such as perceptions, personality and perceptual selectivity. To show the existence of a relationship between attitudes and beliefs or perceptions, Crawley and Koballa (1994:37) stated:

*Beliefs that an individual holds about the consequences of engaging in the specific behaviour within subject effect or personal norm, help the person form an attitude toward engaging in the behaviour.*

In an attempt to examine and understand the attitudes of first year college students toward technology, attitude manifestation will be discussed with reference to manifestation concepts, namely: perceptions, personality and perceptual selectivity.

## **Perception**

Cognitive psychologists hold that, as we move about in the world, we create a model of how the world works. That is, we sense the objective world, but our sensations map to percepts, and these percepts are provisional, in the same sense that scientific hypotheses are provisional. As we acquire new information, our percepts shift. Beliefs and perceptions are not in action. Beliefs are the roots or foundations of our way of thinking. In normal life we do not question or filter our own beliefs. We take them as they are. They include the values that we have. Perceptions however, relate to a method or way of thinking or point of view. It is the filter of any input based on our beliefs.

An important aspect of how we perceive objects or people has to do with what we think they are or should be (Morris, 1973). How technology is perceived depends on what students themselves think technology is. So, because people are limited in what they can perceive, they are highly selective in whatever they choose to perceive and that which is relevant to them. In this process of filtering, different people will react differently even when they are from the same physical environment. They would not always have the same experiences, hence perceptions.

## **Personality**

Personality refers to the characteristic behaviour patterns, emotions, thoughts and attitudes with which individuals consistently react to, in their environment (Morris, 1973). Some characteristics can be so grounded in an individual that they form an individual's personality. For example, a technologically inclined student is expected to demonstrate characteristics such as apprehensiveness, creativity and determination. A study in the UK showed that highly successful students, studying design, were more apprehensive, more experimenting, and more tense than the unsuccessful group who were self-assured and relaxed (Tyers, 1992). In fact, students in particular, display tendencies to engage in various behaviours. These tendencies are what are regarded as personality traits. For example, the tendency to engage in social behaviours is a personality characteristic that is relevant to learning situations. These behaviours (social) are those that are likely to contribute to the well being of others. Technology students are often industrious and cooperative. They generally help their peers and refrain from negative disciplinary actions. Regarding this, Breakwell and Beardsell (1992) have also reported on the importance of the classroom environment as an important factor on students' tendencies to engage in social or antisocial activities. Hence, students are more likely to display unselfish and good social personality traits if their teachers instill these in their classrooms.

## **Perceptual selectivity**

The ability to filter sensory experience is called perceptual selectivity. Perceptual selectivity is influenced by both external and internal factors. External factors relate to stimuli and contexts in which people find themselves interacting while internal factors relate to for example, learning, personality and motivation. It involves active engagement with the environment "such that the perceiver constructs it in the most appropriately informative manner" (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994: 114) Sometimes, out of necessity perceptual selectivity takes over and individuals see only what they expect and want to see. In a sense the

individual pays attention only to a small part of the sensory stimuli and therefore remains uninformed of those things he doesn't expect. To influence technology students' attitudes toward technology, their perceptual selectivity should be manifested. The Perceptual selectivity of technology students can therefore be increased by advocating technology, which means there should be follow-ups, feedback and reports on the situation in schools by the media and other influential sources.

Lumley (1928) an attitude is "a susceptibility to certain kinds of stimuli and readiness to respond repeatedly in a given way—which are possible toward our world and the parts of it which impinge upon us."

Attitudes can be defined as an affective feeling of liking or disliking toward an object (which can be basically anything) that has an influence on behavior. An attitude is not a feeling, cognition, or a form of behavior (Jones, 1979).

Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event— this is often referred to as the attitude object. People can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward the item in question (Henkin, 2000).

Frankfort-Nachmias (1992:241) defines attitudes as: A mental or neural state of readiness represented by cognition, feelings and behaviour; organized through experience, deliberate learning and heredity. This exerts a directive or a dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.

Attitudes therefore have, according to Lord (1997:222) three elementary components:

- (1) The cognitive component,
- (2) The feeling or affective component and,
- (3) The actions or behavioural component.

The three are interrelated; they are always present whenever a person holds an attitude.

According to Anderson (1985) an attitude is a moderately intense emotion that prepares or predisposes an individual to respond consistently in a favourable or unfavourable manner when confronted with a particular object. It is therefore a mental state used by individuals to structure the way they perceive their environment and to guide the way in which they respond or a psychological construct comprised of cognitive, affective, and intention components. Attitudes are also defined as strongly held beliefs that reflect people's opinions and feelings and can be sometimes manifested in behaviour. Chambers and Pettman (1986) have shown that both feelings and information are critical factors in the formation of attitudes, and that these are critical components of understanding.

Harrison (1998), An attitude is "the relatively stable overt behavior of a person which affects his status." "Attitudes which are different to a group are thus social attitudes or 'values' in sense. The attitude is the status-fixing behavior. This differentiates it from habit and vegetative processes as such, and totally ignores the hypothetical 'subjective states' which have formerly been emphasized.

North (1932) has defined attitude as "the totality of those states that lead to or point toward some particular activity of the organism. The attitude is, therefore, the dynamic element in human behavior, the motive for activity."

## **Theoretical Perspectives**

This study was based on social learning theory by Bandura (1969) which suggested that people learn through observing others' behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors. "Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as

a guide for action". Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Necessary conditions for effective modeling: Attention — various factors increase or decrease the amount of attention paid. Includes distinctiveness, affective valence, prevalence, complexity, functional value. One's characteristics (e.g. sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement) affect attention.

1. Retention — remembering what you paid attention to. Includes symbolic coding, mental images, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, motor rehearsal
2. Reproduction — reproducing the image. Including physical capabilities, and self-observation of reproduction.
3. Motivation — having a good reason to imitate. Includes motives such as  $\hat{A}$  past (i.e. traditional behaviorism), promised (imagined incentives) and vicarious (seeing and recalling the reinforced model)

Bandura believed in "reciprocal determinism", that is, the world and a person's behavior cause each other, while behaviorism essentially states that one's environment causes one's behavior, Bandura, who was studying adolescent aggression, found this too simplistic, and so in addition he suggested that behavior causes environment as well. Later, Bandura soon considered personality as an interaction between three components: the environment, behavior, and one's psychological processes (one's ability to entertain images in minds and language). Social learning theory has sometimes been called a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation. The theory is related to Vygotsky's Social Development Theory and Lave's Situated Learning, which also emphasize the importance of social learning theory.

This study is based on cognitive theory Piaget, (1984), focusing on the maturational factors affecting understanding. The accommodation/assimilation dialectic is the part most useful for understanding grown learners. Broadly, cognitive theory is interested in how people understand material, and thus in; aptitude and capacity to learn (thus fringing onto psychometrics and testing), and learning styles (the reference is to one of the few apparently valid styles: and here for a slightly more balanced one). It is also the basis of the educational approach known as constructivism, which emphasizes the role of the learner in constructing his own view or model of the material, and what helps with that.

## **Related Studies**

### **School Environment and Student's Attitude towards Learning**

In Stewart's (2008) study of a school environments' effect on student achievement it was said in the literature review, "School environment is the heart and soul of a school" (p. 184). Using terms in metaphors that are as nebulous as "soul" confounds the definition of school environment. Scholars cannot easily define what a soul is. The definition found in the literature which is a good starting point for a definition is one that can be empirically measurable. Gruenert (2008) posited school environment as the ethos of a school, or the attitudes of a school or the collective mood and morale of a group of people in a school. Gruenert (2008) wrote, "An organization's culture dictates its collective personality. Continuing this analogy, if culture is the personality of the organization, then environment represents that organization's attitude" (p. 58). Gruenert (2008) is not alone in defining environment with attitudes. Allen (2003), too, also equated environment with attitudes.

To further draw the distinction between environment and culture, school culture is more values and beliefs based, and therefore more steadfast and unchanging than school environment which is characterized as based in attitudes



(Allen, 2003). Distinctions between the two constructs are not only drawn by definitions of the concepts of school culture and environment. They are also drawn by the methodologies used to study a school's culture and environment. Culture tends to be studied by researchers in the literature by qualitative means, whereas environment is studied by quantitative means. Although distinctions regarding school environment and culture have been made, both phenomena encompass how people in a group react to the structure and challenges of the organization (Allen, 2003).

Gruenert's (2008) equating of school environment to attitudes helps clarify the issue at hand. School environment (attitudes) can change more readily than culture (personality). Describing environment in this fashion, as a changeable and fluid factor in schools that reflect attitudes is consistent with the California Department of Education's use of the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS). The CHKS has been developed from 19 years of study and is used state-wide in California, to assess school environment and is administered to a population every two years (CHKS Resource Center, 2008). From this assessment, it appears that the California Department of Education has determined that environment and culture are not the same thing, and that environment is quantifiable.

School environment is a people-centered factor which is dynamic within the systems of the institution. This factor is a massive part of the institution of schools. This is due to the fact that schools themselves are a people business. This dynamic people-centered factor of school environment is diverse within an institution, as individual attitudes are diverse. Yet somehow, the collection of these diverse attitudes coalesced to form a school environment or group attitude. Since school environment is people-centered, the term 'school environment' can then be further pruned to reveal that school environment is also emotions-driven. This is evident in the emotions laden questions that are

asked in widely used school environment surveys in California (CHKS Resource Center, 2008).

Baron and Byrne, (1994) contend that attitudes shape individuals' perceptions of the world and their social behaviour. Attitudes, behaviour and feelings are found by some researchers (Christa, 2001) to be linked such that people's attitudes determine their behaviour toward objects and people they meet and influence even the relationships that exist among these with themselves.

### **Factors Affecting School Environment**

In the study by Koth et al. (2008), school environment is examined by school-level factors and classroom-level factors, which predict school environment. Classroom-level factors are defined by the student-teacher relationship, the teacher's classroom management and exposure to in-class deviant and aggressive behavior. It has been determined that classroom-level factors have a greater impact on student perceptions of school environment than do school-level factors (Koth et al., 2008). To clarify this study, students who felt success in their own classroom report the school as a whole as being a successful institution. Those students, who experienced repeated classroom disruptions, reported that the school as a whole had discipline or school environment problems. Students tend to view the school environment as a whole through the narrow prism of their own classroom. The results of this study are a clear reminder to school leaders that students are served in the classroom. Macro, school-level efforts at improving school environment such as reducing school size or staff turnover do not have the impact that classroom experiences have on perception of school environment (Koth et al., 2008). Therefore, a school leader's time should be spent influencing and improving practices in the classroom in order to affect school environment.

Regarding the study by Koth et al. (2008), it is critically important to note that individual-level factors also play a role on a student's perception of school environment, though to a lesser degree than classroom-level factors. These are factors that cannot go unmentioned when discussing the literature of school environment. The factor of student's particular gender and ethnicity when perceiving school environment is well documented in the literature (Koth et al., 2008). They, as well as other work by Griffith (2000) and Welsh, Stokes and Greene (2000), documented the unfavorable perceptions of school environment in general of ethnic minority students and in particular, those minority students who are male. Considerable focus needs to be given to these groups of student populations when attempting to intervene and improve school environment (Koth et al., 2008).

When considering strengthening school environment perceptions with students from minority backgrounds special attention needs to be given to the teacher-student interaction and relationships (Greene, 2005). Greene (2005) concurred with building a positive school environment with strong interpersonal relationships, while nearly always viewing student achievement as a secondary effect of the relationship. Contrary to the findings of the study by Koth et al. (2008) and Greene (2005) also added that school-level factors such as small school size and small class size are especially important for success of urban and minority youth.

There are other factors cited in the literature that may seem more distal to student achievement. Teacher-to-teacher interactions play a role as well; the relationships between teachers in the staff room can affect school environment (Freiberg, 1998). There are also seemingly mundane factors that Freiberg (1998) posed: If the classroom temperature is constantly too hot or cold, the noise in the cafeteria, the physical structure of the facilities can add or detract the quality of school environment. Some in the literature suggested that schools are often

uninviting places, intentionally or not intentionally. Simply encouraging, reminding or training staff to have inviting interactions with students will pay large dividends in the realm of school environment (Garrett, 2008).

### **Students' attitudes towards learning**

Findings of this study can be significant, because an understanding of students' attitudes is important for responsive environmental management (La Trobe & Acott, 2000). Rwanda is concerned about preparing such an environment management policy. The need for such a policy in Rwanda is very important because like many other countries, Rwanda is confronted with a host of environmental issues and problems, for example pollution, deforestation, salinity, urbanization, global warming and climate change, and so on (Ministry of Environment and Forest, 2001). To face these challenges it is important to acquaint our younger generation with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to environment (Sarkar & Ara, 2007), because this generation will affect and be affected by the environment management policy undertaken today.

Glickman et al. (2001) contend that positive attitudes are necessary towards learning especially in the process of unifying organizational goals and meeting students' needs. The goal of students' attitude to improve towards learning, through a reflective approach fostering consistent self-improvement (Glickman, et.al, 2001). According to Glickman et al. (2001), these tasks include 1) Direct Assistance, 2) Group Development, 3) Professional Development, 4) Curriculum Development, and 5) Action Research.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study employed the descriptive survey design specifically the descriptive correlational strategies. Descriptive studies are non-experimental researches that describe the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group. It deals with the relationship between variables, testing of hypothesis and development of generalizations and use of theories that have universal validity. Further, descriptive surveys are used to discover causal relationships (descriptive correlation).

#### Research population

The target population was of 170 teachers of the selected secondary schools of Nyaruguru District.

#### *Sample size*

The Slovin's formula was used to determine the minimum sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \alpha^2}$$

where: n= sample

N= Target population

$\alpha$  = the level of significance 0.05

**Table 1: Sampling frame work from selected schools**

**n = 119**

	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Bigusu	20	18
Sekera	30	21
Muganza	20	18
Nyabimata	50	31
Munini	50	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>119</b>

### **Sampling Procedure**

#### ***Sampling Procedures***

The purposive sampling was utilized to select the respondents. From the list of qualified respondents chosen based on the inclusion criteria, the systematic random sampling was used and finally selected the respondents with consideration to the computed minimum sample size. The researcher selected the respondent from the selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district and distributed questionnaire accordingly.

#### **Research Instruments**

The research tools that were used in this study include the following: (1) face sheet to gather data on the demographic characteristics of respondents (age, gender and experience, subject taught, qualification and nature of the school. (2) Researcher devised questionnaires to determine the levels of school environment and extent of student's attitude towards learning. The response modes and scoring are as follows: for School environment and student's attitude towards learning -1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) agree and (4) strongly agree.

## **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

Validity shall be ensured by checking the questionnaire according to the variables of study against the research questions.

On the other hand reliability shall be achieved by using the following techniques:- Pre-testing of the Questionnaires: The researcher shall do this by going to the field and administering the questionnaires to 6 potential respondents who will not participate in the final study, this will test the content, language and response format of the questionnaire.

The researcher shall also adapt the questionnaires and modify from one used in previous similar studies.

Content validity was ensured by subjecting the researcher devised questionnaires of school environment and student's attitude towards learning (who shall estimate the validity on the basis of their experience) of teachers.

The test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability (accuracy) of the researcher devised instruments to 20 qualified respondents, 20 were all teachers of Nyaruguru District. These respondents were not included in the actual study. In this test-retest technique, the questionnaires were administered twice to the same subjects. And the test was reliable and the trait was being measured stable, the results were consistent and essentially the same in both times (Amin, 2005)

## **Data Gathering Procedures**

### **Before the administration of the questionnaires**

1. An introduction letter was obtained from the College of Higher Degrees and Research for the researcher to solicit approval to conduct the study from respective heads of projects.
2. When approved, the researcher was secured a list of the qualified respondents from the projects authorities in charge and selected through systematic random sampling from this list to arrive at the minimum sample size.

3. The respondents were explained about the study and requested to sign the Informed Consent Form (Appendix 3).
4. Reproduced more than enough questionnaires for distribution.
5. Selected research assistants who assisted in the data collection; briefed, translated in French and handled it to Nyaruguru district commissioner and oriented them in order to be consistent in administering the questionnaires.

#### **During the administration of the questionnaires**

1. The respondents were requested to answer completely and not to leave any part of the questionnaires unanswered.
2. The researcher and assistants emphasized getting back of the questionnaires within five (5) days from the date of distribution.
3. On retrieval, all returned questionnaires were checked if all are answered.

#### **After the administration of the questionnaires**

The data gathered was collated, encoded into the computer and statistically treated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

#### **Data Analysis**

The frequency and percentage distribution were used to determine the profile of the respondents.

The means and interpretations were applied for the levels of school environment and extent of student's attitude towards learning in Nyaruguru district.

The following mean range was used to arrive at the mean of the individual indicators and interpretation:

A. For the level and extent of school environment and student's attitude towards learning;



<b>Mean Range</b>	<b>Response Mode</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
3.26 – 4.00	strongly agree	very good
2.51 – 3.25	agree	Good
1.76 - 2.50	disagree	Poor
1.00 - 1.75	strongly disagree	Very poor

To determine whether there is a significant relationship between school environment and student’s attitude towards learning. Pearson linear correlation coefficient (PLCC) was used to compute the influence of the independent variable to dependent variable.

### **Ethical Considerations**

To ensure confidentiality of the information provided by the respondents and to ascertain the practice of ethics in this study, the following activities were implemented by the researcher:

1. Sought permission to adopt the standardized questionnaire on school environment and student’s attitude towards learning through a written communication to the author.
2. The respondents were coded instead of reflecting the names.
3. Solicited permission through a written request to the concerned head teachers of the selected schools in Nyaruguru District.
4. Requested the respondents to sign in the Informed Consent Form (Appendix 3)
5. Acknowledged the authors quoted in this study and the author of the standardized instrument through citations and referencing.
6. Presented the findings in a generalized manner.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In view of the following threats to validity, the researcher claimed an allowable 5% margin of error at 0.05 level of significance. Measures were also indicated in order to minimize if not to eradicate the threats to the validity of the findings of this study.

***Extraneous variables*** were beyond the researcher's control such as respondents' honesty, personal biases and uncontrolled setting of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter shows the profile information of respondents, the levels of school environment and students' attitudes towards learning and students' attitudes towards learning, and the relationship between the level of school environment and students' attitudes towards learning.

#### Profile of respondents

Respondents were asked to provide information regarding their gender, age, education level, experience, subjects and type of school. Their responses were summarized using frequencies and percentage distributions as indicated in table1

**Table2: Profile of Respondents  
n=119**

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	62	52
Female	57	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Below 25	25	21
26-35	60	50
36 and above	34	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Qualification</b>		
Diploma	45	38
Degree	74	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Experience</b>		
1-5	41	34
6-10	46	39
11 and above	32	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Subjects</b>		
Arts	55	46
Science	64	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Nature of school</b>		
Government	69	58
Private	50	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>

Results in Table 2 indicate that male respondents (over 53%) were slightly more than female respondents (over 48%). This indicates a small gender gap in the distribution of people in Nyaruguru district Rwanda. This small gap may be due to government struggles to promote women.

Regarding age group, respondents in this sample were dominated by those between 26-35 years (51%), suggesting that most respondents in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district are youth. This also indicates a quite young workforce in the schools of Nyaruguru.

With respect to education qualification, majority of the teachers (63%) were degree holders, indicating that teachers in the selected schools are relatively qualified. degree holders were followed by diploma holders (26%) confirming the relatively level of qualification.

Concerning teachers' experience, majority (39%) had an experience of 6-10 years, indicating that teachers in the sample schools were experienced teachers. Sciences were the most subjects taught in the schools over (53%) compared to the Art subjects, this means that there is need to put more effort in Art subjects and over (58%) were in government schools.

### **Level of school environment**

The independent variable in this study was school environment, for which the researcher wanted to determine its level. School environment was operationalised into 10 questions in the questionnaire and they were divided into two parts; physical factors and social and psychological factors. Each of these questions was based on the four Likert scales, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree and 4= strongly agree. Teachers were asked to rate the extent to which school environment is good or poor in their respective schools by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with each question. Their

responses were analysed using SPSS and summarized using means as indicated in table 3. For interpretation of means, the following mean ranges were used;

Mean range	Response mode	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	strongly agree	Very good
2.51-3.25	Agree	Good
1.76-2.50	Disagree	Fair
1.00-1.75	Strongly disagree	Poor

**Table 3: Level of School Environment**

Categories	Mean	Interpretation	rank
<b>Physical Environment</b>			
Teachers, staff, and students are respected and valued	2.39	Poor	1
Staff members have sufficient textbooks and supplies.	2.36	Poor	2
Classrooms and grounds are clean and well-maintained.	2.30	Poor	3
Students are, and feel, safe and comfortable everywhere on school property	2.26	Poor	4
Teachers, staff and students feel that they are contributing to the success of the school.	2.11	Poor	5
School building contains a limited number of students.	2.05	Poor	6
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>	<b>2.245</b>	<b>Poor</b>	
<b>Social and psychological</b>			
There is a sense of community. The school is respected and valued by teachers, staff, students, and families.	2.58	Poor	1
Morale is high among teachers and staff	2.44	Poor	2
The school is open to diversity and welcoming to all cultures.	2.31	Poor	3
Parents perceive the school as warm, inviting and helpful	2.14	Poor	4
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>	<b>2.368</b>	<b>Poor</b>	
<b>OVER-ALL MEAN</b>	<b>2.307</b>	<b>Poor</b>	

The means in Table 3 indicate that teachers rated themselves as agree whereby most of the aspects were fair as indicated in the table of school environment. For example on physical factors all the aspects were Fair including the average mean of (mean=2.245).

On the aspect of social and psychological factors all of them still were fair including the average mean; only one aspect of There is a sense of community. The school is respected and valued by teachers, staff, students, and families with (2.58) that were rated as good. The school environment generally is poor depending on the over-all mean which is rated poor with (2.307).

### **The Degree of Students' Attitudes Towards Learning**

The dependent variable in this study was students' attitudes towards learning in the selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district, which was broken into two parts; physical (measured by 3 questions), and social and psychological (measured by 3 questions). All questions were based on the four point Likert scales, ranging between one to four, where 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. Teachers were asked to rate their degree of students' attitude towards learning by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with each question. Their responses were analysed using means as indicated in table 4. To interpret these means, the following mean ranges were used;

<b>Mean range</b>	<b>Response mode</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree	Very good
2.51-3.25	Agree	Good
1.76-2.50	Disagree	Poor
1.00-1.75	Strongly disagree	Very poor

**Table 4: The Degree of Students' Attitudes towards Learning**

Categories	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
<b>Physical factors</b>			
My teachers demand too much work from me.	2.05	Poor	1
Most of my teachers seem to care about me as a person.	2.05	Poor	2
For the most part, school has been a pleasant experience	1.53	Very poor	3
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>	<b>1.877</b>	Poor	
<b>Social and psychological</b>			
I work harder in school than do most students.	2.46	Poor	1
The main purpose of education is to help me find a good job.	2.35	Poor	2
Getting a good education is important to me.	2.02	Poor	3
<b>AVERAGE MEAN</b>	<b>2.277</b>	<b>Poor</b>	
<b>OVER-ALL MEAN</b>	<b>2.077</b>	<b>Poor</b>	

Results in Table 4 indicate that the degree of students' attitude towards learning is generally fair on most of the items and this is confirmed by the average means and the over-all mean in both factors physical and social and psychological. The results indicate that only one aspect on physical was rated poor for example For the most part, school has been a pleasant experience with a mean of 1.53. This implies that there is need to improve on students' learning

### **Significant relationship between the level of school environment and degree of Students' attitudes towards learning**

The fourth objective in this study was to establish whether there is a significant relationship between the level of school environment and students' attitude towards learning. On this, the researcher stated a null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between school environment and students' attitude towards learning. To achieve this last objective and to test this null hypothesis, the researcher correlated the means for school environment and students' attitude towards learning using the Pearson's Linear Correlation Coefficient, as indicated in table 5 below.

**Table 5: Significant Relationship between the level of School Environment and Degree of Students' Attitudes towards Learning**

<b>Variables correlated</b>	<b>r-value</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Decision on Ho</b>
School environment Vs students' attitudes towards learning	0.672	.000	Significant relationship	Rejected

Results in Table 5 indicated positive significant correlations between school environment and students' attitudes towards learning, since the sig. value was less than or equal to 0.05, which is the maximum level of significance required to declare a significant relationship. This implies that the Fair the school environment is leads to fairly students' attitudes towards learning, when it is good then it is the vice versa. The results indicated that schools' environment is more effective in declining or improving students' attitudes towards learning in the selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district Rwanda.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations following the study objectives and study hypothesis. The researcher also suggests areas for further research here.

#### **Findings**

This study was set to find out the relationship between schools' environment and students' attitude towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district. It was guided by four specific objectives, that included determining the i) profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, education level, teaching experience, subjects taught and type of school; ii) determining the level of schools' environment; iii) the degree of students' attitudes towards learning and iv) the relationship between schools' environment and students' attitudes towards learning.

The findings indicated that most respondents were male (53%), between 26-35 years of age over 51%, majority were degree holders (63%) and over 39% had an experience of 6-10 years, over (53%) were offering sciences and 58%) were in government schools.

The level of school environment, the findings indicate that most of the aspects are found to be Fair on all the average mean of all the two aspects whereby on physical factors (average mean=2.245); social and psychological factors (average mean=2.368) and the over all mean for all the two aspect is (over all mean=2.307). Only one item was rated good and this is there is a sense of community, the school is respected and valued by teachers, staff, students, and families (2.58).

The dependent variable indicate that all the aspects were also rated Fair implying that the Fair environment of the school leads to Fair attitude of students towards learning. All the average mean plus the overall mean was rated poor physical

factors (average mean=1.877); social and psychological factors (average mean=2.277) and the overall mean for all the two aspect is (over all mean=2.077).

The findings also indicate a positive significant relationship between the level school environment and students' attitudes towards learning. This is shown by the fact that the sig. value was less than the maximum sig. value of 0.05 considered in social sciences. This was so because Fair environment could determine the students' attitudes towards learning.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the purpose of the study, the researcher concluded that most teachers in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district were males, between 26-35 years in age, and majorities were degree holders in education with an experience of 6-10 years from government schools offering science subjects.

The level of school environment is generally fair in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district; however there was only one aspect which was good on both aspects physical and social and psychological factors.

The degree of students 'attitude towards learning was also found to be generally fair in all the two aspects in the selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district, and a significant correlation between school environment and students' attitudes towards learning in the selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district Rwanda, the theory of social learning theory was not proved.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings and the conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends there is need to improve on the school environment in order to uplift the students' attitudes towards learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district Rwanda.

Arts subjects should still be encouraged in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district such that students can consider them as science subjects since there also very important.

There is need to uplift the competencies of teachers in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district since most of the teachers were found to be degree holders so they need to upgrade and go for further studies.

**Areas for Further Research**

1. Students' attitude towards learning and the level of performance in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district in Rwanda.
2. Schools' environment and performance of learners in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru district.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix I: Transmittal Letter**

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (DVC)  
COLLEGE OF HIGHER DEGREES AND RESEARCH**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR MR. MUHIGANA VIANNEY TO  
CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR INSTITUTION**

The above mentioned candidate is a bona fide student of Kampala International University pursuing a Masters Degree

He is currently conducting a field research for his dissertation entitled,  
**SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
LEARNING IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NYARUGURU  
DISTRICT, RWANDA**

Your institution has been identified as a valuable source of information pertaining to his research project. The purpose of this letter then is to request you to avail him with the pertinent information he may need.

Any data shared with him will be used for academic purposes only and shall be kept with utmost confidentiality.

Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours truly,

Novembrieta R. Sumil,ph.D.

Deputy Vice Chancellor, SPGSR.

## Appendix II : Clearance from Ethics Committee

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Candidate's Data

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reg. # \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Study \_\_\_\_\_

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### Ethical Review Checklist

#### The study reviewed considered the following:

- Physical Safety of Human Subjects
- Psychological Safety
- Emotional Security
- Privacy
- Written request for Author of Standardized Instrument
- Coding of Questionnaires/Anonymity/Confidentiality
- Permission to Conduct the Study
- Citations/Authors Recognized.

#### Results of Ethical Review

- Approved
- Conditional (to provide the Ethics Committee with corrections)
- Disapproved/Resubmit proposal.

#### Ethics Committee (Name and Signature)

Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_

Members \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix IV: Research Instrument

### APPENDIX 1B

#### TRANSMITTAL LETTER FOR THE RESPONDENTS

**Dear Sir/ Madam**

I am a candidate for Masters Degree at Kampala International University and currently pursuing a Thesis entitled **School Environment and Students' Attitudes towards Learning in selected secondary schools in Nyaruguru District, Rwanda**. In view of this empirical investigation, may I request you to be part of this study by answering the questionnaires? Rest assured that the information that you provide shall be kept with utmost confidentiality and will be used for academic purposes only.

As you answer the questionnaire, be reminded o respond to the items in the questionnaire thus not leave any item unanswered. Further, may I retrieve the filled out questionnaire within 5 days from the date of distribution?

Thank you very much in advance

Yours faithfully

Mr. Muhigana Vianney

**INFORMED CONCENT**

I am giving my consent to be part of the research study of Mr. Muhigana Vianney that will focus the School Environment And Students' Attitudes Towards Learning In Selected Secondary Schools In Nyaruguru District, Rwanda

I shall be assured of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality and that I will be given the option to refuse participation and right to withdraw my participation any time.

I have been informed that the research is voluntary and that the results will be given to me if I ask for it.

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 1VA: FACE SHEET**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

**Gender (Please Tick):**

Code # \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received by Respondent  
\_\_\_\_\_

**A. Profile of Respondents**

1. Gender : \_\_\_i) Male                      \_\_\_ii) Female

2. Age;

   \_\_\_i) less than 21,

   \_\_\_ii) 21-30,

   \_\_\_iii) 31-40,

   \_\_\_iv) 50 and above

3. Level of education: i) \_\_\_certificate, ii) \_\_\_diploma, iii) \_\_\_ Degree

4. Marital status?

i) Single\_\_\_ ii) Divorced\_\_\_ iii)\_\_\_Married

## APPENDIX IV B

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF LEVEL OF SCHOOL ENVIROMENT TOWARDS LEARNING IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Direction 1: Please write preferred option on the space provided before each item

Kindly use the rating guide below:-

Response Mode	Rating	Description	
<b>Legend</b>			
Strongly disagree	1	You disagree with no doubt at all	SD
Disagree	2	You disagree with some doubt	D
Agree	3	You agree with some doubt	A
Strongly agree	4	You agree with no doubt at all	SA

#### SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FACTORS

	Environment	1	2	3	4
	<b>Physical Environment</b>				
1	School building contains a limited number of students.	1	2	3	4
2	Classrooms and grounds are clean and well-maintained.	1	2	3	4
3.	Students are, and feel, safe and comfortable everywhere on school property.	1	2	3	4
4	Staff members have sufficient textbooks and supplies.	1	2	3	4
5	Teachers, staff, and students are respected and valued.	1	2	3	4
6	Teachers, staff and students feel that they are contributing to the success of the school.	1	2	3	4
	<b>Social and Psychological Environment</b>				
7	Teachers perceive the school as warm, inviting and	1	2	3	4

	helpful.				
8	Staff are open to students' suggestions; students have Opportunities to participate in decision-making.	1	2	3	4
9	Morale is high among teachers and staff.	1	2	3	4
10	There is a sense of community. The school is respected and valued by teachers, staff, students, and families.	1	2	3	4

### **Questionnaire To Determine the extent of Student's Attitude towards Learning**

Direction 1: Please write preferred option on the space provided before each item

Kindly use the rating guide below:-

<b>Response</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Legend</b>
Strongly disagree	1	You disagree with no doubt at all	SD
Disagree	2	You disagree with some doubt	D
Agree	3	You agree with some doubt	A
Strongly agree	4	You agree with no doubt at all	SA



## B. STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING

	Response	1	2	3	4
1	For the most part, school has been a pleasant experience	1	2	3	4
2	Most of my teachers seem to care about me as a person.	1	2	3	4
3	My teachers demand too much work from me.	1	2	3	4
4	Getting a good education is important to me.	1	2	3	4
5	The main purpose of education is to help me find a good job.	1	2	3	4
6	I work harder in school than do most students.	1	2	3	4

## RESEARCHER'S CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information

Names : Muhigana Vianney  
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### Educational Background

2010-2012 : Kampala International University (KIU): Master of Education in Educational Management and Administration (in progress)  
2000-2005 : Kigali Institute of Education (KIE); Bachelor of Education in Biology and Geography  
1989-1996 : Groupe Scolaire Runyombyi; Secondary School Certificate

### Work Experience

1997-1999 : Class Teacher at Groupe Scolaire Runyombyi  
2005 : School Inspector at Nshili District  
2006 to date : Headteacher at G.S. Bigugu

### Skills, Interest and Experience

Fluent English, French and Kinyarwanda; Computer Skills

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