

Investigating the causes of illiteracy cases among primary school pupils in Rungwe district in Mbeya region - Tanzania

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This study investigated the causes of illiteracy cases among primary school pupils in Rungwe District in Mbeya Region. Specifically, the study aimed to identify how schools, teachers and parents lead to illiteracy among primary school pupils. Also, the study probed the strategies which could be used to alleviate illiteracy in primary schools on the side of the government and parents. Several literatures explored revolved on the issue of concepts of illiteracy and literacy as well as other literatures which helped to reveal the knowledge gap. The study employed qualitative approach through the use of multiple case study research design. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select study sites and 44 informants whom among were pupils, classroom teachers, head teachers, and District Primary School Education Officer. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and documentary review. The collected data were subjected to content analysis. The study revealed that illiteracy cases among primary school pupils were contributed by schools which represent the government. This was due to the fact that, primary schools were equipped with poor teaching and learning environments. Schools lacked textbooks, classrooms, desks as well as had not inspected for a long time. Further, schools lacked competent teachers in teaching literacy skills in classrooms. However, knowledgeable teachers were old and there were no any alternatives taken to train junior teachers in teaching reading and writing. Teachers also contributed to illiteracy in primary schools in the aspects of frequent absenteeism and utilization of non-participatory methods in teaching literacy skills. Parents were also among the causes of illiteracy in their children. In the sense that, they lack close cooperation with teachers on issues related to children learning in schools. Moreover, some of the strategies which could be employed by the government and parents in alleviating illiteracy in schools were explored. These include: Educating parents on the importance of literacy skills to their children, improving schools teaching and learning environments. This could be done through reviewing curriculum, frequent school inspections, in-service teachers training programme, and providing enough quality textbooks. Besides, parents should ensure that their children attend schools regularly. In addition, the findings showed that the introduction of remedial classes helped in alleviating illiteracy rates. Based on the findings, the study concludes that in order to ensure that pupils become literate schools should be

provided with adequate and quality textbooks, enough classrooms, desks, frequent inspections and in-service teacher training programme. Teachers should fulfil their responsibilities of teaching in classrooms effectively. Parents should provide school requirements of their children and ensure attendances in schools. In addition, the government should introduce remedial classes for illiterate pupils in all primary schools in Tanzania.