

Did the 2019 One and Half-Month Boot Camp Training Enhance Rwanda Development Board (RDB) Interns' English Proficiency?

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Abstract

Employers in Rwanda have been expressing their dissatisfaction with university graduates' low English proficiency affirming that it hindered their performance at work. Rwanda Development Board (RDB) also noticed that the English proficiency and work readiness skills of university graduates on internship in 2019 left a lot to be desired, which was an impediment to the completion of the internship and to the development of their professional skills. To enhance these graduates' communication and work readiness skills, the Rwandan Government, through RDB, sent them to a one and half-month employability boot camp at the University of Rwanda. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating factors that hindered these interns' development of English proficiency and at exploring whether the course helped improve their skills in this language. For the sake of validity and reliability, both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms were applied to collect and analyse the research data. Themes emerging from classroom observations and interviews were analysed inductively and figures used to interpret the trainees' results in the entry and exit English proficiency tests. Research findings revealed that unfavourable linguistic environment, teachers' limited English proficiency, and regular shifts in the medium of instruction were major impediments to the trainees' improvement of English proficiency. Findings also disclosed that the training had helped the majority of participants to boost the four language macro modalities, but that more time was required for slow learners. In agreement with the findings, some recommendations were made on how to effectively support Rwandan students' learning of English.

Keywords: language-learning impediment; listening skills; reading skills; speaking skills; writing skills