



Coaching and Organizational Performance in Rwandan Local Government Entities: Assessing Effects of Coaching Programs between 2016 and 2019 in Rwamagana District

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ABSTRACT

Coaching is considered as a great tool for employees in any organization to understand the goal so as they can work towards it which turns into good performance of the organization. Coaching program was introduced in Rwandan local government entities to see whether employees can improve on these entities' performance regarding performance contract Imihigo. The present paper intends to study effects of coaching programs in the Imihigo region of Rwamagana district. Researchers applied a case study research design through which a case study was selected and qualitative data were then collected. Information collected by the use of interviews and the content from documents was thematically analysed. The GROW (goals, reality, options and will) model was considered as a theoretical guide for the study. The total of 108 Local government employees from Rwamagana district was the target population from which 85 employees were purposively selected. Saturation was applied as a sample elements selection technique. The findings of the paper showed that there are positive effects of coaching programs on the good performance of Rwamagana district in "Performance Contracts" termed as Imihigo. It was revealed that, there are changes manifested due to collaboration existing between the Coaching Program and Local Government institutions in the budgetary years 2017-2019 when this approach was implemented in all Districts. Coaching interventions administered on organization employees showed their influential effects in performing very well in Imihigo contract of Rwamagana district. Based on the aforementioned findings, the study concluded that the coaching intervention, among other factors, was identified as an agent of significant effects manifested in three consecutive financial years towards better performance of Imihigo of Rwamagana district. As suggestions to central, local government and partners, there is a need to undertake coaching initiatives to continue enhancing local government entities' capacity to effectively deliver to their mandate. The national, local government and stakeholders must raise enough money to sustain the implementation coaching approach since it proved to be of importance for local governments. Recipients of the program are supposed to also make the program theirs for its effectiveness and sustainability.

Key Words: Capacity Development, Coaching, Employee's Performance, Local Government, Performance Contract-Imihigo

I. INTRODUCTION

For any organization to be successful, managing human capital is absolutely critical. Today, businesses are continuously seeking opportunities to improve their competitiveness and capacity development is seen as one of the priorities to achieve this objective. Among other ways utilized in developing human resources, coaching is considered as an important and appropriate tool. For Jewel (n.d.), coaching is seen as a competent based interrelation of an experienced advisor and a coachee whose objective is to improve on coachee's achievement and progress in governing organizations. Across the exercise of probe, ideas exchange, with other techniques, the expert is considered as an insight person to support the trained to question and identify his other decision making, demonstration with advanced strategies of reasoning and aliveness, and engage in activities that will lead towards coachee's mission or objectives.

The managerial coaching process shows great impact when it comes to the organizational performance of workers in executive positions as (Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2019, p. 11) indicated in their study conducted in the South America and Spain. It is not only in the south America and Spain where coaching skill is considered as an ingredient for organizations to grow and develop in the places of working for the benefit of improving performance more specifically for profit driven institutions. The highly and frequently extent of applying coaching intervention for



professionals management in an organization or a company is significantly associated to the magnitude of productivity and then insignificantly associated to the extent to which employees leave the company (Szilvia et al., 2019). This can be identified as the emphasis on the fact that coaching is time and time referred to an instrument and techniques for improving and motivating individuals, team and organizations to hit the pleasurable targets at work (Minor, 2007 and Sridarran, 2016).

In Africa, results from the research conducted by Terblanche et al. (2019) revealed a significant resemblance of the coaching interventions in Africa related to those in Europe except a few differences and researchers concluded that Africa's coaching frameworks originate from Europe by the ways training and accepting of different merits of coaching institutions like Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA). When it comes to government institutions, Nyambura et al. (2023) realized that, in Kenya, when employees are inspired the organizational performance improves while when the work determination of employees can negatively the achievement of an organization. It can be said that this inspiration and work determination of employees can be attained in some instances through coaching programs. In most cases, the coaching interventions are adopted to increase employees' determination and accountability in delivering better services to organizational clients.

For the Rwandan government, a coaching approach was adopted as one of the better ways to ensure the improved quality of service delivery influenced by the enhanced performance of local government entities (Deschutter, 2017). "Coaching Program" started in 2011 as a new initiative to develop the capacity of government institutions by enhancing the individual and organizational performance. The program was implemented in phases starting from a pilot program covering 10 Districts, then a roll out program which reached all the 30 Districts and the City of Kigali. As Rwanda adopted Performance Contracts-*Imihigo* as a home-grown initiative aimed at improving performance, the coaching program was initiated to support this result-based performance tool whereby targets to be achieved within a specific period of time are set at household and local government levels and performance management is towards achieving these targets.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Coaching programs of local government authorities in Rwanda are handled by the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) to enable the perfect coordination of programs at the local level (See: <https://www.rgb.rw/1/governance-and-service-delivery/governance>). Through this mandate, in 2011 there was a coaching program started as a new initiative to develop the capacity of local government institutions to enhance the performance of both individuals and their organizations which was marked with good success as per the internal evaluation by Rwanda Governance Board (Ministry of Local Government, 2018, p. 11). Looking at reports of results by the Ministry of Local Government (2017 and 2018) with its partners like Enabel, RGB, RALGA and LODA, coaching programs of enhancing capacities of districts, the assessment and evaluation was done only on the implementation of the programs which might have not included the assessment of effects on both employees and local government entities performance. Reporting on the implementation process is against the impact of the program which is about strengthening the capacity of local government entities to sustainably offer services and improve on the enabling ground for local economic development in the view of perfect governance acts (Ibid, 2018, p. 7). Keeping in mind that Rwamagana district emerged best performer in *Imihigo* performance contracts of the fiscal years of 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 (Igihe, 2018), researchers and other interested intellectuals never became curious to investigate if the coaching programs that the district received were among other factors that influence that recommended performance. In this regard, researchers realized that coaching interventions were carried out with no effect assessment on local government entities' performance. Therefore, the study would state that the element of the post-program implementation effects assessment can be said missing in these result reports.

The International Labour Organization [n.d.] understands monitoring and evaluation as a scientific procedure which involves gathering and analysing information concerning an intervening program over its implementation effectiveness and its long-term effects on the wellbeing of the beneficiaries. The evaluation of the MINALOC and Enabel sought self-evaluation and implementation evaluation without considering the post-program implementation effects; the present study finds it rational to look at the effects of the coaching program on employees and organizational performance after some time of implementation.

1.2 Research Objective

This study wanted to study and identify the significance of the influence of coaching interventions and those changes manifested in *Imihigo* achievements of Rwamagana district as a local government institution throughout 2016-2019 while considering fiscal years. In order to arrive at this objective, researchers looked into the significance, changes happened, and the relationship towards the perfect achievement of *Imihigo* of districts.



1.3 Research Question

The present study sought to answer the question: What is the significance of coaching interventions and their influence on the changes manifested in the Imihigo performance of Rwamagana District as a local government entity during the fiscal years 2016–2019?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualization

The concept of “coaching” can be reviewed as an intervention approach targeting both employees’ and organization’s goal achievement drawn from unleashed potentials of those coached. Whitmore (1992) defined the coaching process as an intervention trying to make clients improve on skills than teaching which eventually help them to open up and use their capacities to achieve their goals. In this way, Whitmore is looking at the side of employees only. However, it might unconsciously be understood that the organization shall have achieved its goals once its employees achieve their goals. After unsatisfactory review of all possible definitions of coaching over years, Willson (2014) describes coaching as: “general future oriented process, strategic developmental intervention that takes place in an evolving relationship of mutual confidence, and uses a variety of tactics that enables subjects to develop resources within them to achieve improved performance and or personal satisfaction, with possible benefits to other stakeholders.”

The definition of Willson may look convincing for us to understand the concept of coaching. It is true that subjects may achieve their improved performance and personal satisfaction with probable benefits to other stakeholders. However, the author does not establish the methods or techniques that shall be used to understand whether the improved performance, personal satisfaction and possible benefits to others have been achieved without establishing assessment strategies.

Even though coaching differs from teaching and training, the present paper tries to understand coaching as an end structured process which brings personal development that is achieved through established running strategies with minimum achievement assessment with the final objective of transforming the personal development into organizational performance. This enables researchers to understand the reason why coaching is preferred by Rwanda Governance Board over mentoring and other types of intervention approaches. Coaching in Rwandan local government entities targets the achievement of a well-defined performance contract *Imihigo*.

“Imihigo” is a Rwandan act which is historically defined as an event whereby two people of higher and lower rank come into a public agreement of achieving committed demanding tasks in a period of time to be marked by evaluation whose results will determine whether the achiever is an example to learn from or the one who failed is worthy of correction in the current local government institutions in Rwanda for the betterment of service delivery (African Development Bank, 2012, p. 6). In a challenging point of view, *Imihigo* represents a both serious and formal promise to maximize the assignment (Sabbi & Ndikubwimana, 2024, p. 350).

The performance of *Imihigo* to evaluate the achievement of the assignment maximization of the formal and serious promise is also made. Standards and indicators for evaluation and assessment of “Imihigo” have been changing over the years since 2006 (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2022). All changes target development indicators. The World Bank Group (2018) asserts that the “achievement of individual *Imihigo* targets in districts across the country no doubt contributed to those impressive national achievements.” The national achievements mentioned are the increase of the GDP, increase of life expectancy, and the reduction of poverty rate. This achievement has been attained maybe because the *Imihigo* system has instilled “competition among the districts” by Mufulukye Fred (Ibid., p. 5). This competition has contributed to the suspicion of data provided by districts to evaluators so that they can come in good positions. One of the pieces of evidence was when the 2019-2020 *Imihigo* performance contracts rituals were suspended by the head of state for the improvement of targets including housing of citizens and their hygiene (Kwibuka, 2019). Despite the role of *Imihigo* in the improvement of development indicators of Rwanda, the part played by employees in districts due to coaching programs is not assessed.

It is normal for any individual, organization, or a state to define goals and mechanisms to arrive at them. The brief and durable targets to attain goals are considered as a way forward to attain the well-defined goals. Armstrong and Baron (1998) describe a contract of performance to be a complementary discussed accord involving organizations on one side and personnel on the other side with regard for the institution to provide satisfactory service to clients in a fair and equitable way ensuring the long life of the organization. Such accords or agreements explicitly explain the desired results by leaders and such results are used to examine the ability to execute the fusion of communal programs and nucleus resolutions (Rotich et al., 2014).

Target determination, when described as a personal engagement to try, or persistence for a target, is an analytical determinant to target achievement (Klein et al., 2001, Meyer et al., 2004). Determination to target is utmost to experience confident results of targets on achievement. Target established research shows that the connection between target difficulty and excellent attainment is powerful as the determination to target improves (Klein et al., 1999).



2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 The GROW Model

In order to understand how individual employees work towards achieving goals set in *Imihigo*, the study reviewed the GROW model (Whitmore, 1992) as its theoretical foundation. The GROW (Goals, Reality, Options, Will) model consists of four levels of operation where there is raising a person's consciousness and comprehension about owned objectives, owned circumstances and convictions, opportunities and materials available to them and then acts that individuals need to make to arrive at individual and professional targets. Whitmore (1992) identifies a need to adopt the GROW model because it forms the most common basis of coaching in many organizations.

2.2.2 The Performance Management Approach

The study also considered the Performance Management Approach with four main elements that compose performance management as described by Carroll (2002). The choice of wanted level of achievement, performance appraisal, dissemination of achievement information, and applying achievement facts to collate the real performance against the accepted performance level can be considered as four major components to comprise the Performance Management Approach. According to Ohemeng (2009), there is a conditional need to include, if not all, some of the elements in any performance management system.

The conceptual framework defined the relationships between the dependent variable which was the performance of the districts as an organization and the coaching program as the independent variable. On one hand, the independent variable put a distinct look into needs evaluation of coaching, coaching intervention plan, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. On the other hand, the dependent variable focused on *Imihigo* performance from the district level.

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirically, Utrilla et al. (2015) discovered that coaching programs have influence on both individual and organizational performance whose foundation is attached to social exchange and the resource based perspectives. The study was done on firming organizations in Spain which with no doubt are different from local government organizations more particularly from Rwandan context. This area is well explored in Europe. For instance, Szilvia et al. (2019) found that in Central and Eastern Europe the high level application of coaching in managing professions in an organization was significantly associated with the extent of productivity and insignificantly associated with the level of staff turnover. The study was interested in company productivity without considering the influence of individual improvement in achieving that productivity. However, the coaching program may be involved in the staff turnover identified. But the latter may be influenced by other factors including a financially conducive environment. One study conducted in Kenya by Muriithi (2016) realized that coaching interventions, to a great extent, had influence on employee's performance. This influence is caused by the frequent provision of feedback, structured coaching plan, and coaching environment. The study finally concluded that coaching interventions in organizations improve morale, motivation, and productivity.

Much has been written on coaching programs on organizational improvement. For instance, Saad (2022) surveyed 195 employees to identify the impact of coaching on their performance and on the performance of their organization. The researcher realized that coaching was of importance in increasing employees' confidence in approaching their managers openly, improving their productivity, impacting the achievement of the organizational goal and minimizing the employees' absence. This study was conducted in the healthcare industry.

The role of coaching on organizational performance was also discussed by Barbara (2012) in an online webinar conducted on 1333 registrants. In this webinar, the researcher reported that 40% of the registrants showed the need for leaders to acquire the coaching skill. Other 30% and 20% of registrants respectively marked coaching as a crucial competency in an enterprise and a required competency for leadership. It is obvious that these registrants were from different types of organizations and from different parts of the world. The literature on the effects of coaching programs in Rwanda is very limited because there have been few coaching programs, more particularly for the performance of local government organizations.

The empirical literature shows that coaching interventions are proven positive to improving organizational productivity. However, this is known in organizations of private status. Therefore, it is of importance to assess the effects of coaching interventions to the performance of public organizations. To this end, the study assessed whether the coaching interventions carried in Rwanda particularly in Local Government entities have contributed to the contract performance *Imihigo* of districts. Identifying these effects contributed to the existing literature as far as coaching interventions towards Rwandan local government organizations performance in *Imihigo* are concerned.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

In order to understand the effects of coaching interventions towards the good performance contracts-*Imihigo* in Rwamagana district, researchers applied the case study research design. The design is applied for getting the in-depth understanding of a particular circumstance or an event under the study while keeping its natural and real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). The design is for qualitative approach which looks into the relationship that can evolve from theory and scientific study and frequently emphasises on the way theoretical assumptions were brought out (Bryman, 2007).

3.2 Study Location

Researchers selected Rwamagana district among other thirty districts as local government organizations in Rwanda. The district was selected due to the fact that it consecutively ranked best performer in *Imihigo* contracts of three fiscal years as from 2016 to 2019.

3.3 Target Population

The target population of the study consisted of all 108 employees of the Rwamagana district. Among these employees included those occupying executive, officers, and implementers positions as from the district level to the cell level.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Researchers purposely selected the study sample which was achieved through the use of random and purposive sampling. Respondents whether participants to the coaching program and key informants were selected through the use of snowball technique. By applying these techniques the study administered both questionnaires and interview to 85 participants.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Researchers employed qualitative techniques of data collection including open ended questions and interviews. Moreover, the study used both secondary data in form of various published scientific works and primary data from research participants via answering structured questions from the open ended questionnaire and other key participants responded to interview guide that was prepared by researchers. Obtained information was analysed and described in the form of percentages relating to frequencies of themes from participants' answers supported by verbatim from interviews conducted.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

Respondents of the study were of diverse profiles including gender, educational qualification, location of residence, profession, legal marital status, age and professional experience. These profiles were of importance for researchers to better understand answers regarding the effects of coaching programs on *Imihigo* performance at the district level.

Fetches from the number of respondents who participated in the study, it was realized that men respondents constituted the majority with 67.9% while women represented 32.1%. With regard to age, many participants were between 25 and 34 (41.0%) and those participants between 35 and 44 represented 30.8% of all 85 participants. Then participants aged between 45 and 54 represented 25.7% while a few respondents who were above 55 years represented 2.5%. This representation indicates that respondents were mature to understand the relevance of the coaching program to the district's performance. For the educational qualification of participants as a determining factor for appreciating the coaching program and its collaboration with the district towards *Imihigo* performance, findings showed that many participants representing 80.8% had a bachelor qualification while only 6.4% had a master qualification. However, 12.8% had a secondary advanced qualification (A2). As far as the positions occupied by the respondents was concerned as an important determinant of the likelihood of the collaboration of the intervention program and the performance of the district, many participants represented by 60.3% occupied position of officers while those of directors were represented by 15.4% and executive secretaries of cells represented 12.8% while executive secretaries of sectors represented 10.3% and finally division managers represented 1.2%. The fact of having respondents from various positions in the district increased chances of having diversified views. Many participants in the study worked at the district level representing 56.5% followed by those at the sector level with 30.7% and those at the cell level representing 12.8%.

Employees' professional experience plays a factual role in getting concise, concrete evidence in relation to problems, pitfalls, and significance of coaching individuals and the performance of an organization. In relation to this study, many participants representing 53.8% had a professional experience which varied between 1 year and 5 years. The following participants represented 37.2% whose professional experience was between 6 and 10 years. Then, participants representing 9% had a professional experience of more than 10 years. Considering these facts about professional experience, researchers were confident that participants would have experienced the coaching intervention to provide useful information.

In view of attaining the research objective, researchers sought to identify perceptions of individual employees in relation to the significance or relevance, changes occurred, and relationship of the coaching intervention's partnership with the district of Rwamagana towards the achievement of contracts performance *-Imihigo*. It is clear that the objective of the study had three aspects: relevance or significance of, changes occurred due to, and relationship of coaching intervention towards the performance of the district in *Imihigo*.

With regard to the first component of the objective, all participants admitted that the coaching intervention was significant despite the difference in their perception level. This is due to the fact that 44.9% which is the majority emphasized that the coaching program is very relevant while 39.7% of respondents said that the coaching program is relevant then 15.4% of the respondents testified the fair relevance of the program. Looking at those who emphasized that the program was very relevant and those who would just say that program is relevant without emphasizing, it is clear that the percentage is higher than the percentage of those who said that the program is fairly relevant. In support of this, one senior official asserted that *"the approach is relevant to a large extent considering the context of local government."*¹

Responses from interviews also showed the falling in line of the coaching program with the decentralization policy whereby the services and capacities including financial and technical skills required are taken down from the top government for better service delivered towards the institutional objective of decentralized government. To achieve this objective, individual employees ought to be empowered by the use of coaching programs for them to better understand roles and responsibilities and possess necessary skills.

Researchers got curious in identifying factors catalysing the relevance of coaching and different reasons were described. Among these reasons there were proper planning, monitoring and evaluation which were highlighted by 60.3% of respondents. Another reason for the relevance of the coaching program was the improvement of human resource management which was proved by 41.1% of all respondents. Then 74.4% of respondents could say that the coaching program has proven its relevance through learning new things. One respondent also witnessed that they:

*"have enjoyed much coaching program in our Districts, a big percentage of our staff from district up to cell levels have gained new skills in various domains like planning, monitoring and evaluation, management, public financial management, human resources management, results-based management to mention but few..."*²

The mentioned advantages of the coaching intervention manifested effect on how individual staff at the organization level performed.

Additionally, researchers discovered structured instruments under the coaching intervention for the benefits of all servants in the district of Rwamagana which consequently play a big role in the performance of the district performance contract *"Imihigo"*. In response to this, the following tools are good for the performance of *Imihigo* in the District of Rwamagana. Such instruments are the following.

Icyumba cy'imihigo "Imihigo room" the specific room space provided in the district premises where *Imihigo* and their updates or progress over performance are exposed to anyone visiting the room so that comments and interventions are provided. Briefly, the *Imihigo* room is used in monitoring and ensuring good standards in filing and reporting to all levels.

Imihigo table "Ameza y'imihigo" a developed mechanism through which the council of the district, executive committee of the district, and the Joint Action for District Forum, on regular basis, convene to discuss over *Imihigo* for evaluating the implementation updates and mobilize for *Imihigo*. This mechanism intends to find solutions to challenges relating to direct involvement and ownership of the district and other partners.

Imihigo Task Board is an instrument that is used to assign integrated *Imihigo* to the individual staff and tries to follow up and evaluate every day. The preparation of *Imihigo* is done from the beginning of each fiscal year, more particularly one week after the ceremony of signing *Imihigo*. It is a tool that helps to assign integrated *Imihigo* to the staff and monitor them on a daily basis. It is prepared from the beginning of the year, especially one week after the *Imihigo* signing ceremony.

Imihigo Dashboard/Billboards is an instrument applied to support everyone to know the *Imihigo* of the district and the pace of their implementation which is quarterly done.

Imihigo Allocation Matrix is the strategy applied to assign *Imihigo* to representatives of district partners and stakeholders or government institutions in order to promote engagement and ownership.



The District *Imihigo* quality assurance team coaching guide book is a booklet invented in the same line of coaching intervention to make sure recipients have the readable document for self-coaching.

In addition to these tools observed and discovered in the documentation of the study, one respondent to the study added that

*“The tools developed in the framework of the coaching program have been used in skills transfer to all staff at all levels of administration. All those tools were in each office and were accessible to all staff to ensure that they are used and productive. We appreciate the program and would have the same across years.”*³

In order to attain the second component of the research objective, researchers delved into changes which manifested during three financial years from 2016-2017, this is the time through which coaching intervention was put in place in different districts, up to 2018-2019. The findings show that there was occurrence of important changes due to the partnership or collaboration of the coaching program and district. These changes include strong determination of politicians and technicians as it was indicated by 67.9% of respondents. In addition to this, 55.1% of respondents emphasized that the collective and team working towards common goals were increased. Moreover, 48.8% said that there was an increased partnership and collaboration between central, local government, citizen's participation and JADF. Finally, 47.4% indicated that the increase of accountability and transparency was also realized. In regard to this, one respondent affirmed these changes as follows:

*“With the coaching program in the district, everyone came to clearly know his/her role and responsibility, how to justify and report achievements and how to work with others towards a common goal. We used to be self-concentrated to our own Umuhigo but thanks to the coaching, we have realized that, own individual performance cannot contribute to organizational performance if there is no team work and from there we increased our collaboration.”*⁴

Researchers finally examined effects of coaching interventions towards the performance of the district in *Imihigo* to confidently affirm whether coaching program affected the performance of contracts in the *Imihigo* of the district of Rwamagana. Results from the analysis of participants' responses indicated that 69.3% of participants affirmed the possibility of influence of coaching programs in better performance of the district in three consecutive financial years from 2016-2019. In the same line, 17.9% affirmed that performance in the management of funds increased as it was specifically indicated in the report of audit whereby Rwamagana district got the clean report. Moreover, 12.8% of participants confirmed that with the coaching program, they could see an improvement in citizen's involvement in budgeting and planning. One interviewee commented:

*“Before the coaching program, Rwamagana district had never been in the good positions especially in relation to performance contract-Imihigo, for example, in 2015-2016 the district was ranked 17th out of 30 districts. But since the fiscal year 2016/17 it is always ranked 1st among all the 30 districts. I won't totally attribute this performance to the coaching approach but I want to emphasize on the key role it played to this achievement though other factors might have contributed.”*⁵

The interviewee added that *“the district currently receives clean audit reports of MINECOFIN and Office of Audit General compared to other previous fiscal years. This performance can be attributed to coaching program.”*⁶

In addition to the fact that coaching intervention was discovered to play a key role in the organizational performance more particularly the performance of Rwamagana district, it was also discovered that the program intervened in empowering politicians/elected leaders and technicians leading to performance, improving citizens and partners collaboration for common targets achievement.

Nevertheless, from various perceptions of participants, researchers identified problems with the coaching program for the sake of proposing solutions to related organizations for the program effectiveness. Major problems identified included limited budget for coaching to continue constituting the major challenge with the rate of 48.7%, kind of workload which does not allow staff to gain enough time for coaching was mentioned by 28.2% of the respondents, less emphasis on the relevance of coaching program to the level of performance by some leaders was reported by 15.4% of the respondents, as well as scarcity of expert coaches as expressed by 7.7%. Moreover, though the coaching program was implemented in Rwamagana district and was appreciated as relevant, coaching interventions did not always base on assessment of needs as affirmed by 33.3%. This was connected to running pilot study from beneficiaries before the starting of a coaching program.

4.2 Discussion

The initiation of performance contracts - *Imihigo* in Rwanda was to serve as a means to speed up national development and accelerate the achievement of government development programmes and priorities. According to IPAR (2015), every level of government as from districts to ministries, agencies and embassies are supposed to plan and execute their *Imihigo* and make sure that they are assessed every fiscal year. In this regard, African Development



Bank (2012) states that *Imihigo* has been identified as a significant instrument to measure performance management and has also been identified as a good mechanism leading to socio-economic based change.

Kwibuka (2019) reported that when the president of the Republic of Rwanda was officiating the signing of 2014-2015 *Imihigo* and the dissemination of the assessment results of the 2013-2014 *Imihigo* achievement in parliament on 12th September 2014, His Excellency Paul Kagame stated that

"Imihigo is a performance contract between leaders and those you serve. Citizens will continue to hold you accountable. As leaders, you must put your words into action and walk the talk. As leaders, it is your responsibility to solve problems faced by citizens in an efficient and just manner. We must uphold a culture of accountability. The progress we have made is not an excuse for complacency. We should look ahead and work to accomplish even more with every step that we take".⁷

In order to achieve the desired performance, different strategies are used and, in the case of Rwanda, coaching approach was adopted as a better tool to increase performance through knowledge and skills transfer.

Roberts (2012) identified levels of coaching process which include plan, deliver, and evaluate. These identified levels ought to be respected to improve planning and delivery of coaching sessions for anyone envisioning to become a successful coach. As a matter of fact, on the first level which is the coaching plan, a coach must sit down and plan for any coaching activity and make prior preparation. However, some do not take time to plan which leads to poor performance in coaching because there were no targets of the coaching. This can be seen in challenges identified by the paper for the coaching program in Rwamagana district becoming more successful than it was. Some of the challenges identified by respondents are linked to limited budget, heavy workload, lack of experts, and leaders who consider the program irrelevant which can be addressed when a proper coaching plan is made.

The good standard of an organization is mostly influenced by the quality of performance of an employee. In the same vein, there is a great influence of supervisor's performance on employee's performance improvement. These are statements that are based on the fact that supervisors are considered as a benchmark for employees and moreover leaders are capable of implementing mechanisms that can increase the performance of employees.

As far as coaching intervention is the subject of discussion in creating conditions to enable people in better performance as their abilities dictate (Richard, 1995), beneficiaries receive instant feedback about their performance which reinforces success and helps them to quickly correct any mistakes. To this end, coaching catalyses the processes of performance improvement. It is referred to as "unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance" (Whitmore, 2010). Intervention in coaching enabled leaders to unleash potential in employees in the organization and start accepting and participating in analytical thoughts by accepting ownership and accountability for their work results and relationships. They require less every day and direct supervision from managers as they improve on their skills and strive to reach their full potential. This existing knowledge in the literature supports the findings of the second objective of the study. The coaching program brought significant changes on how employees and employers in Rwamagana district worked towards achieving *Imihigo*. It was realized that the coaching program changed both politicians and technicians in having a strong commitment to the performance of *Imihigo* in Rwamagana district at 67.9%. Additionally, the increase of collectiveness and team work was found consistent to the literature since the study found it at 55.1%. Collaboration, citizens' participation, transparency and accountability were also found significant towards the performance of *Imihigo* in Rwamagana district. Moreover, the coaching program removed the individualistic approach *"We used to be self-concentrated to our own Umuhigo but thanks to the coaching"*⁵ among Rwamagana district employees in their *Imihigo* performance. These findings are also supported by Willson (2014) while describing the coaching program as a general future oriented process with strategic developmental interventions with tactics to enable subjects to develop powers within them to attain improved performance accompanied by personal satisfaction. These findings were also supported by Whitmore (1992) in his GROW (Goals, Reality, Options, Will) model consisting of operating via four levels raising an individual's consciousness and comprehension of their own objectives, their daily circumstances and beliefs, the opportunities and materials available to them and finally the activities they want to make to arrive at their individual and professional targets.

It was stated by Deschutter (2017) that the coaching program was embraced by the government of Rwanda as a good tool to improve the quality of service delivery influenced by improved performance of local government entities. This literature is linked to the study findings. For the third objective aimed at examining the influential effects of the coaching program towards contract performance, *Imihigo* of the district, the study realized the coaching program influenced financial management and citizens' participation in planning and budgeting. One respondent from the interview said that Rwamagana district became the best performer three consecutive times after employees have benefited from the coaching program. This respondent added that bad audit reports before the three fiscal years analyzed from both MINECOFIN and Office of Auditor General of Rwamagana district were changed to clean audit reports. This good outstanding of the Rwamagana district can be also supported by the Performance Management Approach described by Carroll (2002). This means that the coaching program contributed in increasing the skills of employees in deciding the level of performance, measuring performance, reporting performance, and using the information to evaluate the

agreed performance. Ohemeng (2009) urged organizations to consider the importance of this approach in the management system.

In addition to the fact that coaching intervention was discovered to play a key role in the organizational performance more particularly the performance of Rwamagana district, it was also discovered that the program intervened in empowering politicians/elected leaders and technicians leading to performance, improving citizens and partners collaborating for common targets achievement.

Based on the aforementioned, it is worth affirming that the coaching is significant or relevant in the line of the partnership and collaboration between the coaching program and districts towards *Imihigo* performance as it was revealed in this study. In addition, this matches with the findings of this research in relation with different changes that occurred as a result of coaching interventions in the area of study namely: strong determination or commitment of elected leaders and technicians, increased working collectively and in team towards common goal, increased collaboration or partnership between central, local government and citizens and, as well as improved transparency and accountability. It is also a basis to confirm findings that show that the coaching program is one of the elements that affected the performance of *Imihigo* of the district.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Coaching intervention compared to other interventions to employees towards organizational achievements is pleased to be of much importance. Poor performance in local government organization in Rwanda was taught to be addressed by a coaching program as one of measures towards achieving their goals as reflected in the *Imihigo* performance contract. The outstanding performance of Rwamagana district in three consecutive annual budgets testified the influence of coaching programs towards organizational performance as the study found. It is factual that the coaching program improved its relevance through the improved skills and knowledge in proper planning; human resource management; consistent collaboration and teamwork; having strong commitment to the performance; and in alleviating individualism. Through this, the study discovered that coaching programs could bring citizens' participation, transparency, and accountability in *Imihigo* performance of the district. Based on the aforementioned findings, the coaching program, among other factors, was identified as an agent of significant changes that occurred in the three consecutive annual budgets towards *Imihigo* performance of Rwamagana district.

5.2 Recommendations

However, basing on the findings, all parties involved in the implementation of coaching programs ought to have a common comprehension of the approach for better results. To this end, the study reiterates the necessity to mobilize all involved parties, more particularly recipients for ownership and readiness towards durability of results achieved in the process. Moreover, the problem related to funds was identified in the implementation of the coaching program. Therefore, there is a clear indication that more funds are supposed to be mobilized to take the program at district, sector, and cell levels to improve achievements. It was also discovered that there are persisting capacity gaps to be addressed by coaching approach. This could be achieved by providing a budget for coaching in the budget for capacity improvement in general.

As gaps in coordination were identified thanks to this study, the necessity to reinforce coaching operation mechanisms to guarantee better operational monitoring and the evaluation of the coaching interventions which will ensure value for money. There is also a need to allocate a pool of professional coaches to guarantee availability and accessibility of coaching expertise and this can be realized by investing in specific activities or events and that equip potential professionals from various areas. The generalization of these findings to other local government organizations that performed well in the *initiative* can be contemplated. To this end, the study suggests further assessing studies to be done in *Imihigo* other local government entities that performed well to better understand if the coaching program can have the same effects as it was in Rwamagana district.

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