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STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING ARTS AND HUMANITIES IN EAST AFRICA: RWANDA'S STAKE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at building a positive perception towards the teaching and learning of arts and humanities and advocating for their scholarship given their value in the cultivation of human development in East Africa. The study is anchored in the stakeholders' theory of salience that claims that once latent stakeholders (who belong to arts and humanities) are supported via policy intervention, they survive. Without this support, scholarship and research in arts and humanities are adversely affected. Participants from four East African Community member states, i.e. Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya were involved. The findings show that the general public has less consideration of the teaching and learning of arts and humanities subjects with different and mixed perceptions such as fewer opportunities for employability, inability to justify its *raison d'être* and showcase its technological, scientific and economic contributions, inability to attract research funds, to name but a few. However, the contribution of arts and humanities to the human development ranging from their maintenance of a democratic society, literacy, creativity, resilience, understanding, critical thinking, communicative skills, and practical judgment to long-term civic results is also depicted. Hence, to ensure their survival, there should be a political will to promote them in one way or another.

Key words: stakeholders, perceptions, teaching and learning, arts and humanities, East Africa.

INTRODUCTION

This article stems from a research project entitled "Transforming Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in East African Universities from endangerment to sustainability: Lessons for Rwanda," whose overall objective was to investigate the endangerment situation of arts and humanities in

East African universities in general in order to transform, reinforce and revitalize their teaching and learning at the University of Rwanda in particular with the view of making them self sustainable. The endangerment situation of arts and humanities in higher education is a worldwide phenomenon deriving from governments' prioritization policies geared towards science and technology (Armitage and Bhabha, 2013; AHRC, 2006; Klein, 2005). Today, arts and humanities studies at the University of Rwanda are indeed characterized by a downward trend in terms of student numbers¹ as well as a decrease in both morale and enthusiasm among students and lecturers. Among others, arts and humanities referred to in this study include the teaching and learning of disciplines like Kinyarwanda, English, French, Kiswahili, history, philosophy, performing arts, linguistics and literature. By definition, they are disciplines that study human culture. The British Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC, 2006) lists studies that comprise the scope of this discipline: Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology; Visual Arts and Media; English Language and Literature; Medieval and Modern History; Modern Languages and Linguistics; Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies; Music and Performing Arts; Philosophy, Law and Religious Studies.

The aim of this study is to build a positive perception towards the teaching and learning of arts and humanities in Rwanda, drawing from experiences of other regional universities in particular and some countries in the west. The study leans on East African experiences in a bid to devise strategies that could be employed to build a positive image of these subjects. Moreover, the study intends to raise awareness of the Rwandan public on the economic competitiveness nature of arts and humanities and their potential to enhance the quality of life and creative output of the nation. The following two research questions guided the study: What are the causes of the negative perception towards the teaching and learning of arts and humanities in Rwanda? What do arts and humanities contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life and creative output and economic development of the nation?

In Rwanda, the arts and humanities endangerment started to be felt following the government policy on higher education (in the 2000's) promoting science and technology subjects whereby fewer students got government scholarships to study arts and humanities. In addition, the pass

¹ See University of Rwanda's key facts and figures, 2014-2016.

mark for getting the scholarship to study arts and humanities was made higher than the one for STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). As a result, the policy deeply weakened the then existing departments of African Languages and Literature (LLA), French Language and Literature (LLF), English, Philosophy and History whose student enrolment rate kept decreasing to null during two consecutive academic years (2009-10, 2010-11). This imbroglio has demotivated a number of students and lecturers of arts and humanities, leading to students dropping out from a psychological fear that they would not be favorably considered on the job market. At the same time, some lecturers left the institution in order to avoid being sacked while others sought greener pastures elsewhere within and outside the country.

Yet, the relevance of arts and humanities is explicitly described in the Rwandan government policies as essential in the achievement of the Vision 2020 and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy II [EDPRS II] (MINECOFIN 2000, 2013). Indeed, arts and humanities are of paramount importance for Rwanda as we need to develop our common and unique language (Kinyarwanda), regional languages (Kiswahili for the East African Community (EAC) and African Union integration), international languages (English and French), inter-language communication (translation and interpretation), culture and book industry (publishing, arts and creative industry, library and archive studies). Hence, the arts and humanities comply with and are part of the implementation of the EDPRS II.

As for the country's VISION 2020, the latter stresses the importance of teaching the Rwandan community values through different social policies and programmes leading to good governance in a country that has experienced the evils of the world last 20th century genocide against the Tutsi. Indeed, these different social policies, programmes, initiatives, are part of efforts initiated by the government of Rwanda to reconstruct the country and nurture a shared national identity. In this regard, some aspects of the Rwandan culture and traditional practices that had fallen into oblivion were made recourse to in order to enrich and adapt the country's development programmes to her current needs and context. These programmes include, among others, *Itorero* (a cultural school of civic education where Rwandans would learn language, patriotism, social relations, sports, dancing, songs and defence), *Umuganda* (community work in which members of the community would call upon their families, friends and neighbours to help them complete a

difficult task), *Ubudehe* (a cultural practice of collective action and mutual support to solve problems within a community), *Ndi umunyarwanda* (the “I am Rwandan” initiative, whose ultimate goal is to build the Rwandan identity and foster the Rwandan community based on trust and unity, strengthen the solidarity of the people, uphold their moral and spiritual values). (MINECOFIN, 2013). More importantly, all these home grown initiatives have roots in and supported through the teaching and learning of the arts and humanities. Indeed, this corroborates Klein’s claim (2005) that the humanities invoke values of wisdom and normative qualities required for humane conduct, ethical decision making, and civic responsibility. Henceforth, the little importance given to the arts and humanities subjects is likely to put the country’s cultural heritage at stake contrary to what is emphasized in the blueprints of VISION 2020 and EDPRS II.

This paper was guided by the existing literature which evidences and justifies the value of arts and humanities and the need of teaching and learning them. Hellen Small (2013), Stefan Collini (2012), Jonathan Bate (2011), Nussbaum Marta C. (2010) and many more have extensively discussed the issue in their works. Small (2013: 4-6), in her introduction to “*The Value of the Humanities*”, identified five main claims for the value of the humanities that have been historically influential and still have the persuasive power. These include the fact that (1) the humanities study the meaning-making practices of the culture (...), (2) the humanities are economically useful to society, (3) the humanities have a contribution to make to our individual and collective happiness, (4) the humanities are concerned with the cultural practices of reflection, argument, criticism (...) which have a substantial contribution to make to the good working of democracy, and (5) the humanities matter for their own sake. As for Bate’s (2011) discussion of the public value of the humanities, he argues that the common denominator of the above claims is that the humanities have good effects in the world by their impact on our cultural life, our happiness and politics. Hence, arts and humanities’ ultimate end is to produce adequate philosophers and critical thinkers, adequate historians, linguists, and creative writers who are drivers of human development.

In the same vein, some research bodies such as Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC, 2006) in the United Kingdom have taken the lead to advance and promote knowledge, understanding, research in the arts and humanities and exploit its outcomes. This comes at a time

when the endangerment of these disciplines in many universities of the world is felt. In fact, there is a trend to weigh the economic, scientific, and technological usefulness against cultural/human usefulness of the arts and humanities vis-à-vis the ICTs and Sciences. Here, Small (2013) argues that the kinds of goods represented by the study of the humanities are not all expressible in economic goods, but rather as human goods. This corroborates Kateregga et al.'s (2017) claim that the "Arts and humanities are disciplines holding the key towards solving a complex set of social problems in the current globalised world because they offer a sure channel of imparting analytical and critical thinking skills, effective argumentation and negotiation skills." They contribute either directly or indirectly to the making of the human being. Additionally, when the USA Government passed the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act in 1965, the Act stated that "an advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future".

However, arts and cultural subjects are often rightly or wrongly taxed of producing 'job seeking' students who flood the job market and become a redundant menace to government (Borrop, 2006). In addition, the proponents of the trend of skills-based education held that arts and humanities education has no practical utility in the modern workplace. In this regard, they support that the university education should only be aligned with national strategic and economic needs. Moreover, according to Engell and Dangerfield (2005:5), in order for a university discipline to be successful and draw the support of university administrators, it has to fulfill the following three criteria: (i) to be devoted to the study of money; or (ii) to be capable of attracting serious research money; (iii) to demonstrably promise that its graduates will make significant amounts of money. So, from this perspective, the arts and humanities are clearly knocked out! But, from another perspective, 'arts and humanities for their own sake', Guillory (2003: 537) admits that "knowledge should be defended for its own sake, not solely for its instrumental benefits, because it is the object of a human desire, the desire to know, a desire that ought not be frustrated any more than any other human desire."

This study is anchored in the stakeholders' theory of salience, especially in the works of Mitchel et al. (1997), Slaughter and Leslie (1997), AHRC (2006), Benneworth and Jongbloed (2009).

From this theory's perspective, research has shown that once latent stakeholders (who belong to arts and humanities) are supported via policy intervention, they survive (Benneworth and Jongbloed, 2009). Indeed, research conducted in the UK, Canada, and Australia in the domains of arts and humanities has shown that there is prioritization of knowledge and scholarships within universities given to some stakeholders and not others. And this has affected in many ways the scholarship of and research in arts and humanities.

METHODOLOGY

Design, settings and participants

The study, conducted in 2015-2016, subscribes to a qualitative design as it relies on worded responses from the participants. The overall aim of a qualitative research is to strive to understand a certain societal behaviour, explain its *raison d'être*, and provide answers to related concerns. In this respect, in order to identify the major causes of stakeholders' low interest, attraction, motivation as well as opportunities in arts and humanities, five East African Community (EAC) member states, i.e. Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya were sampled. Secondly, a set of focused criteria such as public and private universities from EAC countries constituted our basis for selection. More specifically, one public (Pc) and one private (Pt) university in each country were selected, and had to be the oldest institutions offering arts and humanities (because of their long experience). Data were drawn from the following universities: Kenya: University of Nairobi (Pc) and The East African University (Pt); Tanzania: University of Dar-es-Salaam (Pc) and Open University of Tanzania (Pt); Uganda: Makerere University (Pc) and Islamic University of Uganda (Pt); Rwanda: University of Rwanda (Pc) and University of Kibungo (Pt).

The selection of participants was done using convenience sampling and strategic technique. Firstly, we wanted to explore variation through the lenses of different arts and humanities stakeholders including students, university managers, academics, parents, professionals within arts and humanities, politicians and education policy makers. Secondly, these groups of respondents were purposely selected taking into account their relevance and role as major stakeholders in the education and labour sectors and their possible contribution to this specific study. However, categories of government officials, professionals from arts and humanities

disciplines and parents were only used for Rwandan participants. The authorities at the central government level involved include the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the Ministry of Labour (MIFOTRA), parastatal institutions including Rwanda Education Board (REB), Higher Education Council (HEC), Rwanda Development Board (RDB), Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture (RALC), Institute of National Museums of Rwanda (INMR), Public Service Commission (PSC), Work Development Agency (WDA), and the Private Sector Federation (PSF). The Rwandan Parliament was also visited, and six Members of the Parliament in the Commission of Education, Research and Culture were met in an FGD mode. The participation was determined by the participants' availability and willingness to take part in research (Bryman, 2008).

To grasp adequately the reasons why the students choose to join the arts and humanities disciplines, five first and final year students from each higher learning institution were selected for focused group discussions (FGDs). In all the universities, two respondents at the managerial positions (principal, dean or head of department) and lecturers were interviewed. The researchers were unable to travel to Burundi to collect data due to insecurity that was prevailing during that period. The table below summarizes the respondents involved in this study:

Table 1: Participants

Category of respondents	Country	No. of respondents	Instruments administered
University administrators (Principal/Dean/ Head of Department)	Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania	12	Semi-structured interviews
Lecturers	Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania	16	Focus group discussion
Students	Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania	50	Focus group discussion
Parents	Rwanda	10	Focus group discussion
Senators/MPs	Rwanda	6	Semi-structured interviews
Ministry of Education	Rwanda	2	Semi-structured interviews

(MINEDUC)			
Higher Education Council (HEC)	Rwanda	1	Semi-structured interviews
National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC)	Rwanda	2	Semi-structured interviews
Rwanda Educational Board (REB)	Rwanda	2	Semi-structured interviews
Ministry of Labour (MIFOTRA)	Rwanda	2	Semi-structured interviews
Public Service Commission (PSC)	Rwanda	2	Semi-structured interviews
Rwanda Development Board (RDB)	Rwanda	2	Semi-structured interviews
Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture (RALC)	Rwanda	5	Semi-structured interviews
Institute of National Museums Rwanda (INMR)	Rwanda	2	Semi-structured interviews
Workforce Development Authority (WDA)	Rwanda	3	Semi-structured interviews
Private Sector Federation(PSF)	Rwanda	3	Semi-structured interviews
Total		120	

Data analysis procedure

The qualitative data in this paper were thematically analysed (Boyatzis, 1998; Patton, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012) by searching for significant themes in the participants' thoughts and reflections. The analysis consisted in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data that describe, organize and interpret some parts of the searched phenomenon.

In the first stage, researchers shared notes from FGDs and semi-structured interviews. The next stage was the identification of relevant concepts and information with regard to the overall aim. The third stage consisted of dividing concepts into potential themes which were then applied on the whole material. The fourth stage consisted of developing codes (Boyatzis, 1998) that would be used to analyse the findings. At this particular time, we proceeded with choosing quotations that would illustrate and support arguments being made while interpreting the data. Finally, the selection of quotations was based on the variation and richness of information provided in the participants' responses that contributed to the understanding of the researched problem. In this

respect, there is uneven use of quotes from participating countries, females and males, and public and private universities. Researchers attended to data that only provided relevant information and more explanation to contribute to the understanding and discussion of the researched topic. The participants' assurance of confidentiality was guaranteed as they were identified by the letters M or F (male or female) to designate their gender, S for student, P for parents, L for lecturers, R for Rwandan respondents, U for Ugandan respondents, T for Tanzanian respondents and K for Kenyan respondents.

DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

The findings of this study yielded by the thematic analysis are based on the respondents' reflections on what constitute the reasons of the negative perception towards the teaching and learning of arts and humanities, the contribution of arts and humanities in the enhancement of the quality of life and creative output and economic development of the nation, and the way forward to build a positive image towards these subjects.

1. Public awareness and participants' mindset vis-à-vis arts and humanities subjects

Under this theme, the respondents were asked to voice their level of awareness on the declining situation of arts and humanities, reasons for the decline as well as responsible agents for the decline. When you closely look into the participants' responses, there emerge issues on education policy and priority, the mixed perception, and the current labour market demands.

A. Education policy and priority

This has been a central issue across almost all the respondents. Here below are some of their reflections:

“...Because of the discourse of politicians who are only advertising science and technology, arts and humanities tend to be relegated to lower position, therefore not relevant to the society. But indeed this is misconception of these subjects because they are really relevant” (FGD, ST).

“Promoting science and technology is good, but the rhetoric to devalue other disciplines should be avoided. The consequence is that nobody will be interested in taking subjects with no relevance to the society and no offering job opportunities” (FLT).

“The current education policy which does not give the place that arts and humanities deserve, has affected the perception of parents on languages. They [parents] do not support their children to choose them” (NCDC).

“The government has a hand in this situation. In sciences, for example, people [students] are given opportunities to study outside of the country. [There is] more motivation from government. However, no such opportunities are given to people from arts. And most parents force their children to go for sciences” (MPR).

From the above statements, it stands out clearly that most of the respondents agree that the policy of promoting science and technology is a good one. In addition, incentives or motivations injected into these disciplines are worth being done in order to attract more scholarships. More importantly, it is via science and ICTs that the sustainable development sought by the developing nations will be achieved. However, the respondents stated that it would not academically and politically be fair to despise or devalue other disciplines in the open air. Indeed, there have been some statements made by some public figures in the region ridiculing and undermining some humanities subjects like history and even languages. As a consequence, very few students taking up lower status subjects will be government sponsored because of funds shortage. Moreover, the future of secondary school goes majoring in combinations of arts and humanities such as History Economics Geography (HEG), English Kinyarwanda Kiswahili (EKK), and English French Kinyarwanda (EFK), etc is not secure. More importantly, parents who are major stakeholders and providers of students to higher learning institutions are reluctant to send their children to those lower status subjects, hence, the declining situation of the arts and humanities in all directions.

B. Mixed perceptions

The perception of the general public towards the decline of the arts and humanities is the second issue seen as important by most respondents. They had this to say:

“Traditionally, the perceptions in the country are negative. But, it is difficult to know the origin of this” (MIFOTRA).

“[...] There is also misconception that arts cannot transform people’s lives. The government can keep on promoting some disciplines, but it is not good to give some others negative labels as ‘lower’ priority” (MLU).

“Public opinion in the country is that if you do not study sciences related subjects, you have no future. Your way is closed” (MLR).

“Many people do not understand. A friend asked me what I was doing in MA of languages. Are you sure you are going to get a job? She asked me. We are in an environment where people want to hear Law, Medicine, and Engineering” (FGD, SK).

“There is perception that people who study arts deal with and speak words, only ‘*rugambology*’ or the science of words [...]. So, most of the students go to sciences, economics and management-oriented subjects hoping to easily get jobs” [...] (FLR).

“People give little attention [to the arts and humanities], and do not understand the relevance of arts and humanities, hence researchers should provide evidence to bring about change” (MINEDUC).

“...Only people with arts and humanities background understand its relevance. However, other people also know it but don’t want to acknowledge it. For example, who don’t know that languages are necessary for communicating and spreading these ICT achievements? Really, its relevance can easily be seen” (FGD, SR).

Different perceptions were sensed within the participants. Many positive responses were heard echoing the relevance of the arts and humanities to the society and human species. They argued that neglecting arts and humanities subjects can lead to the loss of one’s cultural identity and values, national cohesion and belonging, lack of historians and critical thinkers, linguists, and creative writers. On the other hand, there are negative perceptions today towards those subjects as the world we live in is interested in quick income generating programmes that offer ready-made jobs. As a matter of fact, people taking on arts and humanities are often ironically reduced to people who only speak and know words. Others go further to believe that graduates of arts and humanities are doomed to flood the job market: no bright future for them! This explains why the arts and humanities subjects are given little attention whereby learning and studying them is ‘*amaburakindi*’ (literally meaning that one does not have any other alternative). What calls for research based evidence of its relevance to the society, hence, what can bring about change of mindset.

C. Job market demands

The third issue largely discussed by the participants is the current job market demands. The issue is that today, most people [students] want to focus on studies that can quickly open them to job

markets. And yet, according to some respondents, the arts and humanities are not of this caliber. However, other respondents are of a different view: arts and humanities stand well at the job market. The following statements were made:

“The main possible cause is that these programs are not directly linked with practical aspect of it, which means that they are too theoretical, and do not reflect real life situation, particularly labour market demands [...]” (MLT).

“Job opportunities open for arts and humanities students are many: journalism and communication, public relations, politics, language trading including translation and interpreting, education, research, etc.” (FGD, SK).

“We are not afraid of future careers after graduation. If you look at the figures of joblessness in Tanzania, arts and humanities graduates are fewer than Science graduates! We have chances and many opportunities to get employed” (FGD, ST).

When you analyze the unemployment problem after graduation in a wider context, it is a global issue concerning all the spheres of jobs. Some students have even vehemently claimed to have no fear about having less chances of being employed after completion of their studies compared to their counterparts from STEM subjects. This indeed corroborates the views of the Public Service Commission in Rwanda that graduates who have taken arts and humanities subjects have vast arrays of job opportunities ranging from education, journalism, business, public relations, administration, entertainment industry, and research institutions. Furthermore, arts and humanities appear on the occupational demand list (ODL) established by the Work Development Agency in Rwanda as areas in which the country also needs to be self-sufficient.

2. Relevance of arts and humanities to the modern world that is getting more and more science-, ICT- and market economy driven

This theme was yielded from the participants’ reactions on the question whether arts and humanities still have relevance to the modern world that is getting more and more science-, ICT- and market economy driven as well as whether they support that university disciplines with very fewer students be closed. The following were some of their statements:

“Can you imagine Rwanda after 20 years without people who studied Kinyarwanda, history, languages, philosophy (...) and the case of the recent imbroglio on ministerial order on Kinyarwanda orthography? The discussion has been endless because people did not understand clearly the science of Kinyarwanda” (FLR).

“No way can language be divorced from culture. The establishment of RALC by the Government (Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture) means that arts and humanities are important. How will the institution achieve its mission if there are no people who studied the science of the language? Later, we will have people who do not understand and cannot write the language correctly” (RALC).

“Yes, of course, closing history, mother tongue teaching, cultural studies, is a disaster to the human being. Any human development and transformation is rooted in and backed by its historical and cultural artifacts. So, unless the world is only governed by robots, otherwise human sciences should be given their value and place (FLT).

From the above reactions, you can deduce that “*au rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir, jamais les arts et sciences humaines ne partiront pas les mains vides*”², to borrow and adapt from Aimé Césaire’s famous speech. Arts and humanities have something to offer to and share with the modern world driven by science, ICT and market economy. Indeed, all the participants disapproved the closure of programmes with poor enrolment because they are needed in the society, though not in the same way and with the same weight as those subjects of science and technology. In addition, every discipline is unique. Furthermore, according to UNESCO, arts and humanities subjects such as history and mother tongue are proposed as tools for national transformation and development. This is indeed true in the sense that in many developed countries, there are some arts and humanities subjects like music, dance, drama, and public speaking, which open innumerable job opportunities for graduates and the youth. In this regard, the contribution of the arts and humanities in the enhancement of the quality of life and economic development of the nation can be seen in the national gross domestic product.

3. Future survival of arts and humanities

Given the challenges encountered in the teaching and learning of arts and humanities, the participants were asked to suggest ways out for arts and humanities to regain a positive image, attract sponsorship and students, and fit at the job market. The participants pointed out the policy as the main driver, then arts and humanities alumni to showcase and market the success stories of arts and humanities as well as higher learning institutions to revisit and update arts and

² The concept is borrowed from Aimé Césaire’s discourses and speeches on Africanism and the black man with regard to the latter’s contributions. He argued that the African would not go empty handed in the face of the world meeting of civilizations.

humanities curricula to match them with the current market demands and needs. Below are some statements:

“Over the years, we [the system, policymakers] have had overemphasis on science and technology. Some people might have thought that they [arts and humanities] are not important [...]. This has been disastrous to the arts” (REB).

“The current education policy which does not give the place that arts deserve has affected the perception of parents on languages” (NCDC).

“To ensure survival of curriculum, designers should incorporate practical skills. Also, the political will can promote in one way or another arts and humanities as well. [There should be] marketing strategies/campaigns to make arts and humanities’ relevance known to the public” (MLT).

“To take advantage of successful alumni, mobilize them, if they [alumni] get in touch with the students, they can attract them, and help them to get the feel of their professional success” (MINEDUC).

“Need for research to showcase the benefits and achievement in arts and humanities; need of think tanks for arts and humanities” (REB).

From the respondents’ views, the survival of the arts and humanities lies in the hands of all its stakeholders namely the policymakers, higher learning institutions, parents, students and alumni. This will be achieved thanks to a political fair treatment of the arts and humanities subjects in terms of educational planning and policy taking into account the arts and humanities, scholarships, facilities as well as infrastructure allotted to them. Secondly, higher learning institutions should conduct research in arts and humanities to prove their relevance to the society, hence market them to the parents who are the main suppliers and sponsors of students. Similarly, there should be regular updates of curricula to be much more practical and meet the ever changing labour market demands. The involvement of alumni and successful professionals in the arts and humanities during seminars, meetings and exchanges with students is likely to lure them and boost their morale through the former’s successful stories, achievements and opportunities showcased by the arts and humanities.

DISCUSSION

This study intended to generate awareness of the East African public in general and the Rwandan public in particular on the value, usefulness and economic competitiveness nature of arts and humanities as well as their potential to enhance the quality of life and creative output of the nation. In this section, we discuss reflections of arts and humanities stakeholders on its public value and use and the way forward to build a societal positive image towards teaching and learning arts and humanities subjects. We focus on their potentials to address societal issues, their contribution to economic development and welfare of the people and the call for fair treatment, planning and advocacy to the arts and humanities at all decision making levels.

Generally, the findings show that the general public has less consideration of the teaching and learning of arts and humanities subjects with different and mixed perceptions such as fewer opportunities for employability of the subjects, inability to justify their *raison d'être* and showcase their economic contributions and inability to attract research funds. This finding is not far from what Armitage and Bhabha (2013) write in their article on mapping the future of the humanities. They state that the humanities currently suffer from lack of public comprehension of their practice. This has even led to little budget allocation worldwide because bigger portions of many government education budgets are earmarked for domains of pure sciences, information and communication sciences and vocational training (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Bate, 2011). This also corroborates the findings of Kateregga et al.'s (2017) study on the endangerment of the arts and humanities subjects in selected East African universities. It was found that the prioritization of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines in these universities at the expense of arts and humanities has left a legacy of budget cuts for the latter, and as a consequence, many of these disciplines were closed. Nevertheless, the findings also show that the value and uses of these disciplines are also well outspoken as they contribute to solving societal problems and addressing national economic development.

As earlier said, the Government of Rwanda has successfully been trying to resuscitate traditional and cultural practices rooted in the studies of arts and humanities in order to address current societal problems, bring about unity among Rwandans, and sensitize the latter on their identity and heritage (MINECOFIN, 2013). The country's development programmes built on home

grown initiatives such as *Abunzi* (Community Mediators), *Gacaca* (Community Courts), *Girinka* (One Cow per Poor Family Programme), *Imihigo* (Performance Contracts), *Itorero* (Civic Education), *Ingando* (Solidarity Camp), *Umuganda* (Community Work), *Umushyikirano* (National Dialogue Council), *Umwiherero* (National Leadership Retreat), to name but a few, have yielded important socio-economic positive results in the reconstruction of Rwanda following the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. This echoes Ntakirutimana's (2010) findings that the return and recourse to arts, humanities and social studies in Rwanda have generated integrated socio-economic and sustainable development. People are sensitized on cultural heritage and identity and unified around their shared destiny to solve justice problems and promote national reconciliation. In this respect, the claim about the contribution of the humanities in making individual and collective happiness becomes apparent. Of course, in the eyes of some, these achievements are not easily quantifiable, but Small (2013) argues that the kinds of goods represented by the study of the humanities are not all expressible in economic goods, but rather as human goods. Obviously, there may be consequences on the socio-economic development of any country whose scholarship undermines the arts and humanities which contains its history, past, present and future, its cultural values, norms, attitudes and traditions of the society that are transmitted from generation to generation.

In this study, the participants have eloquently pointed out the competitive nature of the arts and humanities and their potentials to become drivers in development. Indeed, the major criticism leveled against arts and humanities is that their graduates are job seekers instead of job creators. Yet, in their study on college majors, unemployment and earnings in the USA, Carnevale and Cheah (2013), demonstrate that “unemployment rates for those with humanities degrees are similar to those with non-humanities degrees, and that the average income of a college graduate in the humanities considerably exceeds that of the average income of a high school graduate.” In another study by Kreager (2013) conducted in the UK to assess the long-term career patterns of arts and humanities graduates and their hidden impact on the British economy, it was found that the graduates are actively engaged in and provide value to the British economy, particularly through their participation in the management, media, legal, and finance sectors. More importantly, thanks to arts and humanities graduates' inter-cultural skills, “they are valuable to employers in helping them grow their businesses and mitigate risks in an increasingly globalised economy”, according to the National Humanities Alliance (2014).

In solving the problem of unemployment and job creation in Rwanda, the participants pointed to the fact that many people, more particularly the youth, are today resorting to the arts and humanities' various fields such as entertainment, music, dance and drama, films, fine art/crafts, and public speaking (for example at weddings). Indeed, in other countries, like USA, UK, France, to name but a few, those are subjects that open up many job opportunities for graduates and hugely contribute the GDPs in these countries. Obviously, if they are also promoted in Rwanda and in the whole of East Africa, they can contribute to absorbing these students on the job market. This then calls for their support and funding scholarships in arts and humanities. However, according to the British Council (2014: 12), there is much debate around the education funding whereby the latter is mainly geared towards "fields of study that can stimulate economic growth and provide work-ready skills, such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects, rather than education in the humanities."

To conclude, this study aimed at building a positive perception towards the teaching and learning of arts and humanities and advocating for their scholarship given their value in the cultivation of human development. The contribution of arts and humanities to the human development ranges from their maintenance of a democratic society, literacy, creativity, resilience, understanding, critical thinking, communicative skills, and practical judgment to long-term results, including existential, vocational, and civic results. To ensure their survival, from the stakeholder's saliency perspective, there should be a political will to promote them in one way or another. In addition, it is recommended that curriculum designers incorporate practical skills in the subjects to be more competitive at the labour market. Finally, there is a need to design marketing strategies and campaigns to make the relevance of arts and humanities known to the public.

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