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ABSTRACT
The aim of the study was to investigate the factors underlying performance of secondary school students in core subjects and electives. Specifically the study sought to identify the factors affecting secondary school students’ high motivation towards core subjects and the electives. The target population was REB officers, secondary school head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers and students from three secondary boarding schools in Nyamagabe district, Rwanda. A total of 188 people were purposively and randomly sampled. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and participant observation. The findings obtained through qualitative and quantitative data analysis revealed that a significant relationship existed between core subjects and secondary school students’ motivation. The study concludes that summative national evaluation of core subjects, appropriate teaching aids, rewards and government scholarship were among the factors affecting secondary school students’ motivation towards core subjects. On the other hand, lack/ inadequacy of instructional materials, teachers’ qualification, teachers’ character and personality and failure to give evaluation results on time hinder the students’ high motivation to learn non core subjects and electives. Subsequently, due to poor performance in English and French, the number of graduates from the EAC. Hence, the study recommends that secondary schools should be equipped with instructional materials like text books relating to non core subjects and electives; non core subjects grades or marks should be taken into account during the process of promoting students or making their certificates; teachers should be given in-service training sessions as the world changes time after time and all education stake holders especially head teachers and parents should help learners so that they could treat all subjects with equal significance.