

Reflection on the Paris World School Champions 7.0

When I was first told that I was participating at the Paris World School Champions 7.0, I felt nervous and excited. Excited because I was going to have the privilege of coming across new individuals, learning new tactics, and viewing debate being practiced at an international level; nervous because I was entering a realm where the participants and technique was going to be greater than any tournament I had participated at before. Now that I look back at the experience, I am certain that participating at the tournament was one of the best enlightening experiences I had as a debate competitor.

Over the course of five rounds, I quickly learned that winning wasn't going to come easily. As a matter of fact, I didn't win as expected. At first, that was frustrating, because I walked in there thinking that I wanted to prove myself and demonstrate that I could compete at the same level of teams that I looked up to. But the more the tournament progressed, I realized that losing rounds wasn't an indication of me giving in. Rather, every round was like a mirror that reflected areas of my debate that I lacked. And reflected precisely areas where I needed to raise my game. In that respect, those lost rounds proved to be amongst my best teachers.

I discovered that organization wins more than I ever knew. A few of my arguments, though good in merit, lacked organization and cohesiveness that made them hard to understand and convince judges and passersby alike. Hearing other teams, I could see how an organized argument was able to grasp even the most complex ideas with ease and convincingly. Similarly, I was more aware of common phenomenon arguments that require not just advanced points, but also to anticipate challenges and respond to them in a cohesive and logical manner. Too frequently, I allowed rebuttals to distract me, yet I saw how greater coherence and more effective signposting would make my argument so much more compelling.

The other important thing that we learned was consistency at the level of teamwork. Debate is not performed by an individual; debate is extremely teamwork-oriented. We would unknowingly go out of sync as far as strategy or not clash with the other person's argument as hard as we possibly could. Observing successful teams educated me to the fact that debating is the relay race: all speakers receive the baton passed by him or her who comes before them and continue it together. That teaching has pushed me individually to train more intently with my team members but never solo.

Beyond the technical aspects, the experience gave me exposure that simply cannot be imitated. I was exposed to debaters from all types of nations, and they had their own methods of presentation, formulation, and convincing. Debaters used wit to neutralize some, some relied on extremely close argumentation, and others were sheer rhetoricians. Exposure to this variety expanded my appreciation of what debate can be. It taught me that everybody does not have a particular formula for success, yet there are habits of discipline, preparation, and clarity which always dominate.

Most importantly, Paris showed me that debate is not about victory, but about progress and people. I made friends that I will carry with me to Nairobi and for the rest of my life, and I came home with things that I would never have received if I had not pushed myself on such a rigorous stage. I might not have won so many rounds, but I believe I gained something far more important: the road map to being a much better debater.

Now, as I anticipate Nairobi and the World Schools Debating Championship in 2026, I am much better prepared and centered. I understand how to better myself: perfecting my structure, perfecting argumentation, perfecting coherence, and perfecting teamwork. Paris was not an end but a start, and I am grateful for that because it showed me what I am incapable of alongside what I am capable of.

In the end, the Paris World School Champions 7.0 was not about winning rounds. It was about what lessons I learned that I took with me, how it made me a better person, and how it pushed me to keep pushing to be the best debater, as well as the best ambassador Rwanda can have from around the world.

I am grateful to iDebate for allowing us the opportunity to participate in the PWSC 7.0, an experience that has been invaluable for my growth as a debater.