

**FACTORS AFFECTING WRITING SKILLS OF SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KAMPALA CENTRAL**

BY

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DECLARATION

I Ndagire Justine Helena, declare that this dissertation is my original work and has never been submitted for the award of a degree, diploma or any other academic qualification in any other university, college or institution before.

Signature:..... Date: 24-08-18.....

NDAGIRE JUSTINE HELENA

APPROVAL

This dissertation entitled 'factors affecting the writing skills of secondary school students in Kampala Central' was done under my supervision and has been submitted to the College of Education, Open and Distance Learning at Kampala International University with my approval as the supervisor.

Signature:  Date: 24/09/2018

KAMULEGEYA SIRAJE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved mum the late Nabiryo Annet, my dear guardian Kalanzi Nakityo Justine (Mrs.), my aunt Lunkuse Irene, siblings Solomon, Precious and Tabitha, and friends for their support throughout my education.

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KEY TERMS

Job satisfaction: The fulfillment of the working conditions or desires for a position at which one regularly works for pay.

Teacher training: The education and preparation of individuals enabling them to become professional teachers.

Teaching: The systematic presentation of facts, ideas, skills and techniques to pupils.

Writing: Communicating through written symbols.

Writing skills: Ways of writing/writing competences

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ABSTRACT

This was an exploratory study about the factors affecting the writing skills of secondary school students in Kampala Central. This was after the realization that the grades in national exams especially in rural areas were consistently not the best owing to poor writing skills. Yet, writing skills are a key subject crisscrossing both the sciences and humanities and as such it has far reaching implications for career development. The study specifically sought to achieve the following objectives: to identify the factors that influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central; and to examine the ways of improving the writing skills of students in Kampala Central. To achieve the stated objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions: what factors influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central? Which ways can improve the writing skills of students in Kampala Central? The study design took the form of a case study. The study also involved purposive sampling in which the data sought were qualitative. Sixty respondents were purposively selected for the study from six secondary schools. Each school was represented by 10 respondents who included five students and five teachers. The data were collected using interviews and observations for primary data and documents analysis for secondary data. The data were analyzed qualitatively through the literal description and narrations of the emerging issues out of which authentic conclusions were drawn. The study found out that writing skills are influenced by multifaceted factors that include remuneration of teachers, teacher training, external forces, workplace conditions, in-service training, motivation to teach and emotional factors. The study also found out that improving writing skills needs a multifaceted approach (e.g., by paying attention to the welfare of teachers [salaries and stipends]). The study concludes by noting that writing skills will for some time be of mediocrity not until the factors that influence performance of the teachers are redressed by the government, education planners and policy makers. The mediocrity will continue not until those who wield influence and power realize the importance of teachers and education in nation building. The study also concludes that improving writing skills calls for a multifaceted approach that incorporates all stake holders such as teachers, parents, students, government policy makers and syllabus designers who should come up with a formula that addresses the plight of education and teachers in Uganda. The study recommends that the government, education planners, policy makers and other stakeholders should consider job satisfaction of teachers as a major determinant in the efficacy and efficiency of the teacher to guide the teaching-learning process including the writing skills of learners. This calls for incentives, policies and programs that enhance the esteem, confidence and satisfaction of teachers. The study also recommends the alignment of teacher salaries with other fields as an ideal intervention to make the education profession attractive. Counseling should be made part of the induction process of teachers as one way of reassuring them and creating job satisfaction in their work. Incentives that give teachers esteem, confidence and job satisfaction such as scholarships, low interest loans, discounts, medical insurance and stipend should be considered.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background, problem statement, purpose, specific objectives, research questions, significance and scope of the study.

1.2 Background of the study

Writing is very important in our daily lives [more so in academics]. However, writing can be difficult and time consuming for many students. Studying writing skills of students is quite insightful as it gives a clear understanding of their creativity, comprehension and analysis of issues (Baba, 2018). Despite such importance of writing skills, the universal nature means that the less academically gifted students find it very hard to excel. Such students have struggled and failed. The problem has been compounded by the fact that what is studied keeps changing with time. However, the pedagogies of the teachers, their quality and teaching resources remain more or less the same in developing countries such as Uganda. Notwithstanding this, however, writing skills are like a multifaceted discipline crisscrossing into the humanities and sciences. This makes it a dilemma for many mediocre students to comprehend. The writing skills of many students in secondary schools [in Uganda] need improvement while student poor performance in English language and other fields has been blamed on their abysmally low proficiency in writing (Ibe, 2009). Writing skill difficulties are the most significant problems that affect most students learning English as a second or a foreign language (Baba, 2018). While students may be effective speakers of English, they need guidance to become effective writers. They need to learn how to transfer their knowledge of grammatical concepts from oral language to written language. By connecting their knowledge of oral language to written language, teachers can demystify abstract grammatical terminology so that students can write and read with greater competence and confidence (Bevely, 2000). A written composition may not be quite so simple. A writer has to imagine that he or she is speaking to somebody as he or she is writing (Baba, 2018). For success in writing, one should apply the golden rule of writing whereby you imagine that the person you are writing to is with you and that you write the words as you would have spoken them (Ibid). It

is along this background that this study had to investigate the writing skills of students in Kampala Central.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The interdisciplinary nature of academics makes it difficult for the average and mediocre students to develop adequate writing skills (e.g., the scientific way of thinking has allowed the development of models, theories and hypotheses that have become increasingly difficult for many average students to comprehend in writing). However, little effort has been made by teachers to develop the writing skills of students. The education and preparation of individuals enabling them to become effective professionals is still questionable in Uganda and yet special skills and abilities are necessary to succeed professionally and in life. Matters have not been helped by limitations such as the poor remuneration of teachers, ill-trained teachers, large classes and inadequate supervision. Thus, it is not a surprise that the grades in the national exams especially in rural areas are below expectations.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting the writing skills of secondary school students in Kampala Central.

1.4 Specific objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the factors that influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central.
2. To examine the ways of improving the writing skills of students in Kampala Central.

1.5 Research questions

To achieve the stated objective, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central?
2. Which ways can improve the writing skills of students in Kampala Central?

1.6 Significance of the study

Data on the writing skills of students in Uganda are very sketchy. Thus, there was need to generate specific data on writing skills of secondary school students using Kampala Central as a case study more so when the grades in the national exams are not the most impressive. The hope is that this study will yield data that will be useful for proper planning and for a framework of action into the improvement of writing skills. The findings, conclusions and recommendations will hopefully benefit teachers, students, syllabus designers, education policy makers, academics and opinion leaders to base their decisions and actions on concrete knowledge of issues supported by research other than subjective judgments. The researcher also hopes that the study will form the basis for further research into writing skills and academic performance.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study focused on the writing skills of secondary school students in Kampala Central. The study was qualitative and conducted in May 2018 using a case study design and purposive sampling. A sample of 60 respondents was purposively selected for the study from six secondary schools. Each school was represented by 10 respondents who included five students and five teachers. The data were collected using interviews and observations for primary data and documents analysis for secondary data. The study sought to identify the factors that influence writing skills of students; and to examine the ways of improving the writing skills of students.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed the literature related to writing skills. The literature particularly focuses on the factors that influence writing skills of students and the ways of improving writing skills of students which all relate to the objectives of the study.

2.2 Factors that influence writing skills of students

The literature indicates that writing skills of students is influenced by a combination of factors that include remuneration of teachers, teacher training, external forces, school culture, in-service training, motivation to teach and emotional factors.

2.3.1 Remuneration of teachers

Low teacher salaries are a major factor in the performance of teachers (Carnegie Foundation, 1990; Harris & Associates, 1992; Ingersoll, 2001; Page & Page, 1982). It is clear that salaries have been a major factor in teacher exit for some time and remedies have not been forthcoming to do anything about it. One could predict from equity theory (Cascio, 1987) that teachers who do not believe that they are paid equitably for the work and hardships they must endure will take action to remedy the inequity. One of these remedies is leaving the profession. Teachers who leave the profession equate higher salaries with a greater sense of professional accomplishment. In addition, wage differentials have an impact on teacher performance (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Rickman & Parker, 1990). Two factors usually relate to the discrepancy in salary: the field one chooses and the length of time one stays in the field. In USA for example, in 1998, the gap between teachers and non-teachers ages 22-28 was approximately \$7,900, but the gap between the two groups tripled for ages 44-50. This gap was worse for teachers with advanced degrees (Education Week on the WEB, 2000). Attempting to align teacher salaries with other fields is an ideal intervention used to make the education profession more attractive (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997). Poor rural areas tend to lose teachers due to the difference in salary schedules.

Differences in funding and market conditions are cited as reasons for causing the teacher shortage in certain geographic areas (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). Increasing salaries is one solution to the problem. Other ideas have surfaced in the literature to help compensate for the lower salaries. Offering scholarships or loans for a teacher's education and providing stipends for teaching in fields that are typically harder to fill are two suggestions (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Providing stipends to teach in low-income rural areas is a potential solution (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993). Providing relocation costs and providing new teachers with local merchant coupons can be part of the recruitment process (Eberhard et al., 2000). Several studies have indicated a link between salary and benefits and the teacher performance or level of commitment (Choy et al., 1993; Faupel, 1992; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997; National Education Association, 1997a; Page & Page, 1982; Perie & Baker, 1997). Chapman (1984) reported that there is an association between salary and academic performance.

2.3.2 Teacher training [Pre-service preparation]

Pre-service preparation is defined as a teacher education program at a college or university that provides instruction for teacher candidates to become effective facilitators of the teaching-learning process (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Eberhard et al., 2000; Huling, 1998). Strong teacher education programs are vital to a strong teaching force so that teachers are adequately prepared for their jobs. Strong programs can increase teachers' performance (Darling-Hammond, Berry, Haselkorn & Fidler, 1999; Fleener, 1998; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997). Making changes in university programs and requirements for teachers are interventions that can increase teacher performance (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). One pre-service program change is adding more time for school practice (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; The Holmes Group, 1995; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Other major changes in university programs may include more course work and more field experience and lengthening the teacher education programs to more years (Huling, 1998).

2.3.3 External forces

There are forces that affect a teacher's ability to instill writing competences and are beyond the teacher's control. In fact, these forces sometimes are beyond the control of the school and

ministry. These outside factors are referred to as external forces, and can be defined as those things that could help or hinder a person as they attempt to perform their duties as a teacher [and as a student]. Local partnerships, minority affiliations, community organisations, parental involvement (National Education Association, 1997a; Perie & Baker, 1997), social issues and conditions, increased diversity, spending by the district (Gritz & Theobald, 1996), and job availability (Page & Page, 1982) are a few examples of external forces. Job security (Luekens et al., 2004; Page & Page) and social status of the profession are considered to be external forces. These forces may have an effect on performance and longevity of the teacher in the profession (Gritz & Theobald; 1996; Harris & Associates, 1992; Luekens et al.). When teachers face the different facets of their jobs, external forces can be important to their performance. Supportive parents, attitudes of children, and spending issues may play an important role in their decision to perform. Most performing teachers had parental support.

2.3.4 School culture

School culture and the environment in which teachers work, have a significant impact on writing skills (Chapman & Hutchenson, 1982; Chapman & Lowther, 1982; Gaede, 1978). Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996: 69) stated: it is clear that the shape of the teaching work force depends not only on the qualities and qualifications of individuals who enter, but also on how occupational and workplace factors affect teachers' decisions to perform. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996: 86) defined school culture as the dominant ethos of the organisation, its values and visions, and the everyday experiences of the school community members. This domain includes such factors as administrative support to the teacher in assigning duties and workload, administrative support with discipline, staff involvement, and teachers working as a team. Overall, a positive working environment for teachers is part of the school culture. Working conditions for teachers are directly impacted by the principal's leadership style (Darling-Hammond & Sclan). This area is one that can be controlled predominantly at the school level. The environment that teachers work in influences the teacher's performance. Feeling like a professional where they have control over their work influences performance (Alt et al., 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997; Luekens et al., 2004; Moore-Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Perie & Baker, 1997; Riehl & Sipple, 1996).

2.3.5 In-service training

In-service training refers to the learning one is exposed to after accepting the role of being a teacher. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996: 75) defined in-service training as the programs that formally socialise them into teaching while Eberhard et al. (2000: 4) defined in-service training as facilitating a teacher's progression toward effectiveness. This knowledge can be obtained through a variety of methods. Helping a teacher become effective in the classroom is the purpose of in-service training (Newcombe, 1990) and this training should be designed to help newcomers stay in the profession (Rosenholtz, 1989). It helps the teacher to provide connections between what was taught at the university level and real teaching (Wolf, 1991). Receiving help from an experienced teacher through observations and conferences provides the teacher support in the first couple of years of teaching (Wildman & Niles, 1987; Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, & Niles, 1992; Virginia Department of Education, Division of Teacher Education and Licensure, 2000a). School- and district-wide professional development programs are used to help teachers develop their skills and abilities while becoming effective facilitators of the teaching-learning process (Choy & Chen, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Gaede (1978) supported the concept that teachers needed to have a period of transition that provides support during the first couple years of teaching.

2.3.6. Motivation to teach

Motivation to teach refers to one's feelings about the teaching profession. Some factors are: desire to work with young people, feels stimulated to teach others, and feel efficacious and motivated in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Huberman, 1989; National Education Association, 1997a, 1997b); feel challenged in the profession and see opportunities for professional growth (Chapman & Lowther, 1982; Darling-Hammond & Sclan); strong commitment to the field of education (Chapman, 1984). In addition, how others perceive the role of the teacher in the community is in this domain.

Teachers generally are drawn to the profession for reasons other than extrinsic factors. As far back as 1960, teachers reported satisfaction because they wanted to help children (National Education Association, 1963). Studies that are more recent still indicate a high level of commitment because teachers are satisfied in helping children and making a difference (Harris & Associates, 1992; Kushman, 1992; Luekens et al., 2004; National Education Association,

1997a). In 2000, over one-half of teachers who left the profession in USA felt that the challenge, prestige, and advancement opportunities are better outside of the teaching field (Luekens et al.)

2.3.7 Emotional factors

The mental health of a teacher equally affects the writing skills of students. Both positive and negative factors cause various degrees of performance. Positive factors are enthusiasm and a high level of energy when teaching in the classroom. Negative factors are stress, burnout, and anxiety (Terry, 1997). Negative factors hinder the performance of a teacher. Anxiety, stress, and burnout can affect a teacher's ability to create an environment conducive to learning. Burnout most often occurs for those teachers who are very dedicated and committed to their careers. They tend to work long and intense hours to achieve their goals (Farber, 1991). For teachers to remain enthusiastic year after year, the principal must implement strategies that will enhance the mental health of the teaching staff (Eberhard et al., 2000; Terry, 1997). Terry (1997) included five suggestions for principals to use with teachers. They are positive feedback, high standards, opportunities for professional growth, support systems, and increased parental and community involvement. Coates and Thoresen (1976) indicated the mental health of a teacher might be more important than a teacher's knowledge of the subject matter and methods of teaching. Anxiety is a concern with beginning teachers and can result in a negative effect on thousands of students across the country (Coates &Thoresen, 1976). New teachers have very high expectations and burnout results when reality is not constant with those expectations (Terry, 1997). Teacher burnout is a cause of attrition and must be dealt with to increase the performance of teachers (Berry, 1995; Dworkin, 1985; Terry).

2.4 Ways of improving the writing skills of students in Kampala Central

Writing is an essential aspect in the survival skills of any student. It is essential that Ugandan students possess knowledge of the writing skills. Otherwise it would complicate their ability to comprehend and analyze issues globally. Thus, they need to be aware of the importance of writing skills. To simplify the process of learning, variation is a key word in this case. If a teacher uses the same writing skills over and over again the students are less likely to learn than if the writing skills are varied (Baba, 2018). The most likely guarantee for students to develop their writing skills is that writing of essays is used frequently during class. The more the students

get used to writing, the more natural it seems for them to think and transform those thoughts into written form. Writing skills play an important role in communication, and the ability for one to express his thoughts and ideas with clarity and ease. This is a key asset during a student's academic life, but it doesn't just end there. Writing skills continue making an impact when students graduate and have to prepare their first cover letter and resume. When they have successfully stepped into the corporate office, they have to write daily business e-mails, draft proposals and ink contracts. Solid, professional writing skills are demanded of every successful manager. Writing skills can be improved in the following ways more so by taking care of the plight of the condition of the teacher [and learner].

2.4.1 Equalization of salaries

Ballou and Podgursky (1997) noted that teacher salaries have a correlation on the ability of the teacher to competently teach learners. They suggested the equalization of salaries with other professionals as an intervention measure to make teaching more attractive especially in poor rural areas [so as to attract talented teachers who can train students to improve on their writing skills]. The low morale thanks to the low salaries was curtailing the capacity of the teachers to impart writing skills.

2.4.2 Bursaries for students and stipends for teachers

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2000) and Kirby and Grissmer (1993) teacher competences [like assisting learners to develop writing skills] can be improved by the offer of stipends for teachers in areas that are typically hard to reach and scholarships or bursaries to students [who are talented]. This was deemed a motivational factor with positive implications on the writing skills (Grissmer, 1993). Definitely, there are lessons for Uganda to draw from this.

2.4.3 Social benefits

Several studies have indicated a link between salary and benefits and the teacher competence and level of commitment (Choy et al., 1993; Faupel, 1992; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997; National Education Association, 1997a; Page & Page, 1982; Perie & Baker, 1997) [to help learners improve their writing skills]. With the deflated salaries in Uganda and teachers on the receiving end, one wonders how they can be committed to assist learners to develop their writing skills.

2.4.4 Teacher induction and support

Darling-Hammond and Sclan(1996) contend that teacher induction, support, evaluation, retention and job satisfaction have a strong influence on writing skills of students. These have a mentoring impact on teacher performance [including the training of learners to develop writing skills]. In Uganda teacher induction, support, evaluation, retention and job satisfaction are a mystery.

2.4.5 Counseling

Counseling has an effect on the ability of the student to develop writing skills and also on the efficacy of the teacher to train learners to develop writing skills. Eberhard et al. (2000) and Terry (1997) noted that on several occasions teachers suffer mental breakdown or burnout but have no professional counselor to talk to them. As such they were bound not to thoroughly train their students to develop writing skills. The mental breakdown and burnout was leaving teachers with less enthusiasm to teach (Terry, 1997).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the methods that were used to collect the data. It also points out the area of study, research design, sample framework, sample size, data collection methods, data analysis and limitations of the study.

3.2 Area of study

Kampala Central is the main focus of government buildings, schools, businesses, hotels and lodges, shopping malls, supermarkets, bookstores, theatres, foreign diplomatic missions, offices local and foreign NGOs, casinos, night clubs, places of worship, clinics, informal trade and a major transport, financial and commercial hub for Uganda.

3.3 Research design

The study was conducted using a case study design. A case study design involves an intensive, descriptive and holistic analysis of an individual, group, institution or phenomenon in order to gain an insight into larger cases (Abel & Olive, 1999:173; Onen&Oso, 2008:71). The researcher, therefore, considered Kampala Central as a bounded case study for an in-depth study.

3.4 Sample framework and sample size

A non-probability sampling technique involving purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. The primary consideration of purposive sampling is on the researcher's judgment as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study (Kumar, 2011; Onen&Oso, 2008). Thus, the researcher only goes to those people who in his opinion are likely to have the required information and willing to share it with him (Kumar). Purposive sampling technique was used to identify those respondents with the relevant information with a view of generating focused information. A sample of 60 respondents was purposively selected for the study from six secondary schools. Each school was represented by 10 respondents who included five students and five teachers. The data were collected using interviews and observations for primary data and documents analysis for secondary data. After engaging 60 respondents in the

study, the researcher assumed that no more new information was likely to emerge. As noted by Kumar, in qualitative research, when no more new information is emerging, it is assumed that one has reached the data saturation point and accordingly, the sample size is determined. Thus, the sample size was determined by the data saturation point instead of being fixed in advance.

3.5 Data collection

The study used of a combination of data collection techniques hoping to draw on the strengths of each other. The data collected were both primary and secondary. Primary data were collected using field observations and interviews. Secondary data were collected by documents analysis (i.e., by the review of the earlier publications, official records, government publications, reports, journals and internet search). This enabled the researcher to acquire already processed or analysed data out of which research gaps were detected and comparisons made. Secondary data sources also provided data that may not have been acquired from primary sources.

3.5.1 Interviews

This instrument involves face-to-face discussions, interaction or interpersonal communication between the researcher and respondents intended to elicit opinions (Abel & Olive, 1999; Onen&Oso, 2008). This instrument was used to yield descriptive or qualitative data. As noted by Abel and Olive (1999), attitudes, perceptions and emotions are best studied by qualitative methods. Thus, the interviews permitted the researcher to go beyond the statistical results. Structured and unstructured questions were used in the interviews. Under the structured interviews, a formal list of open-ended questions was asked to all respondents in the same way (appendix A). For the unstructured interviews, the interviewer probed respondents and guided the interview according to their answers. During the interviews, the researcher asked questions to identify the factors that influence the writing skills of students; and to examine the ways of improving the writing skills of students. Interviews were conducted with 60 respondents purposively selected from six schools on their presumed knowledge about the subject of study. Each school was represented by 10 respondents who included five students and five teachers. The aim was to collect focused data and data that were hard to observe in order to elicit opinions. Direct contact with the respondents also provided the researcher with the opportunity to gauge

the accuracy of the answers given and seek clarifications on unclear responses by asking supplementary questions.

3.5.2 Observations

This instrument involves the use of all senses to perceive and understand the experiences of interest to the researcher (Onen&Oso, 2008. Data were gathered through disguised observations (non-participant observation) in which the researcher was passive by merely taking notes in his diary of what he had observed (e.g., about the evidence of writers clubs in the school). To achieve this, a list of items to be observed was made. The list consisted of the essays of students, notices on school notice boards, sign posts in the schools, study materials such as magazines, newspapers, novels, etc. and evidence of debating and writers clubs [appendix B]). This enabled the researcher to yield information which the respondents are normally unwilling or unable to provide; to record information as it occurs; explore topics that may be uncomfortable to informants; notice unusual aspects; and to gain first-hand information to bridge the gap between what the respondents say and what actually happens. Such data enabled the researcher to identify the factors that influence the writing skills of students; and to examine the ways of improving the writing skills of students.

3.6 Data analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively. This involved a phenomenological approach by emphasizing a deep understanding of the observed phenomena and views of the participants, literal description and narration of the emerging issues out of which authentic conclusions were made. During the interviews and observations, the researcher noted down in his diary the relevant issues (episodes, situations, events or instances) for accurate reporting. The main themes that emerged from the field notes and interviews were noted down, quoting extensively in verbatim format. Content analysis of the interviews and observations enabled the researcher to identify the main themes, similar phrases, relationships between variables, common sequences, differences and isolated patterns in order to reach conclusions with great authenticity.

3.7 Limitations of the study

The study on writing skills as a correlate to teachers could have been conducted in the whole of Kampala City. However, the nature of the research design (i.e., case study) and sampling technique (i.e., purposive sampling) confined the study to a relatively smaller area of Kampala Central and with only a few respondents. Besides, the sampling technique and the tools that were used in data collection have their own weaknesses. Thus, the data gathered mainly applies to this area or areas with the same conditions. In addition, the study was conducted for only one month in May 2018 using a sample of only 60 respondents, which limited the scope of the data collected. Further, the researcher was a student and therefore, had limited time and financial resources for an extensive study. Such factors may limit the generalization of the study to other parts of Uganda or lower the validity and reliability of the study. Nevertheless, this study provides a fertile ground for further research on the writing skills and teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study on writing skills of secondary school students as a correlate to teacher competence in Kampala Central. This was after the realization of the role of writing skills in academics and various domains. The data collected were qualitatively analyzed by the literal description and narration of the subject matter (i.e., content analysis of the emerging issues) followed by the making of authentic conclusions and quoting extensively in verbatim. The analysis, interpretation and presentation of the findings are under the following subsections: factors that influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central; and ways of improving the writing skills of students in Kampala Central.

4.2 Factors that influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central

The first objective of this study was to identify the factors that influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central. To achieve the stated objective, the study was guided by the following research question. What are the factors that influence the writing skills of students in Kampala Central? The data collected and analyzed under this question revealed that the writing skills of students in Kampala Central were determined by multifaceted factors that included remuneration of teachers, teacher training, external forces, workplace conditions, in-service training, motivation to teach and emotional factors.

4.2.1 Remuneration of teachers

The study found out that teachers would train their students the skills of writing if their salaries were comparable to those with similar qualifications in other occupations. Given the meagre pay they are paid, many felt that if a better opportunity arose, they would not hesitate to leave the teaching profession and that they were not fully committed in imparting skills to students. This is similar to the observations of Carnegie Foundation (1990); Harris and Associates, (1992); Ingersoll (2001); Page and Page (1982) that low teacher salaries are a major factor in the high exit rate for teachers in USA. It is clear that lower salaries were contributing to teacher

dissatisfaction in Kampala and contribute to the poor grades. Many teachers said that they were willing to leave the profession because they do not believe that they are rewarded equitably for the work and hardships they must endure. This is also similar with the equity theory (Cascio, 1987) that teachers who do not believe that they are compensated equitably for the work and hardships they must endure will take action to remedy the inequity by leaving the profession. It can be argued that the wage differentials have an impact on teacher performance in like assisting learners to develop writing skills, a point that had also been noted by Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996); Rickman and Parker (1990) in the supply and teacher turnover.

4.2.2 Teacher training

The study also revealed that teacher training had an effect on the writing skills of learners. Some teachers observed that through training they learn how endure and accept teaching as a calling, community service and national duty for which they must be satisfied about and should therefore work for the success of their students and as such help them to develop writing skills. A female graduate teacher in her 20s contend that there is a strong relationship between teacher training and the skills imparted in the learners [writing skills]. In this regard, strong teacher education programs are vital to a strong teaching force so that teachers are adequately prepared for their jobs including helping learners to develop writing skills.

4.2.3 External forces

The study found out that there are forces that affect teachers to perform excellently [including the training of learners to develop writing skills]. These included job security, social status of the profession, supportive parents, attitudes of students, and spending issues. The study established that these play an important role in the decision of the teacher to leave or stay in the profession and therefore train learners in skills such as writing. A female teacher on condition of anonymity noted that she loves teaching and seeing young people learning but autocratic head-teachers, job insecurity, unsupportive parents and undisciplined pupils make teaching hell and she was ready to quit should a better opportunity arise. This is similar to the observations made by Gritz and Theobald (1996); Harris and Associates (1992) about job satisfaction and the longevity of the teacher in the profession. From the interviews, the performing teachers had parental support and disciplined pupils.

4.2.4 Workplace conditions

The study revealed that most of the teachers dissatisfied with their career cited inadequate support from the administration, students and parents as the main area of dissatisfaction and therefore limiting their ability to train writing skills. Of the teachers not performing excellently, cited the lack of support from the administrators. Schools with higher levels of reported teacher autonomy had high levels of reported teacher commitment and performance including good writing skills of their learners. Thus, there is a strong association between workplace conditions and writing skills. High performance was acknowledged when teachers were less likely to be threatened by administrators, students and parents. Poor working conditions and lack of administrative and collegial support were the primary reasons given for teachers producing grades or writing skills. The implication is that teachers who taught in a professional environment were more likely to produce students with excellent writing skills.

4.2.5. In-service training

The study also revealed that through in-service training, teachers become more committed and high performers. That is, by acquiring new pedagogies, conferencing and sharing with experienced educationists and become more effective a point made by those teachers who had upgraded through in-service training courses. This is similar to the observations made earlier on about the importance of in-service training courses in the career of teachers (Wildman & Niles, 1987; Rosenholtz, 1989; Newcombe, 1990; Wolf, 1991; Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, & Niles, 1992; Virginia Department of Education, Division of Teacher Education and Licensure, 2000a). The implication is that professional development programs can be used to help teachers develop their skills and abilities while becoming effective facilitators of the teaching-learning process a point also noted by (Choy & Chen, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

4.2.6. Motivation to teach

The study also found out that motivation was one of the determinants of the writing skills of students. A female teacher on condition of anonymity echoed that she joined the teaching professional because of the desire to work with young people [to help them develop skills such as writing skills]. This stimulated her to teach others and that she feels efficacious and motivated in the classroom a point noted by (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Huberman, 1989; National

Education Association, 1997a, 1997b). The implication is that motivated teachers will have more satisfaction and longevity in the teaching profession than those who are not and therefore assist learners with writing skills. Thus, teachers who feel challenged by their work are more apt to persist in and have a greater satisfaction with their employment a point also noted by (Chapman &Lowther, 1982). Such people believe they can make a difference, and that keeps them motivated to ensure that their students get good grades by improving on their writing skills. Those dissatisfied with teaching felt that the challenge, prestige and advancement in opportunities were better outside of the teaching field a point also noted by (Luekens et al.). Thus, teacher commitment is strongly associated with writing skills.

4.2.7. Emotional factors

The study also revealed that the mental health of a teacher directly relates to writing skills whereby both positive and negative factors cause various degrees. The Positive factors identified were enthusiasm and a high level of energy when teaching in the classroom while the negative factors were stress, burnout and anxiety. According to the findings, negative factors hinder the performance of a teacher and reduce job satisfaction. A senior male English teacher noted that anxiety, stress, and burnout could affect the teacher's ability to create an environment conducive to learning, resulting into reduced performance and writing skills. He noted that burnout most often occurs for those teachers who are very dedicated and committed to their careers and work long, intense hours to achieve their goals. This concurs to what Farber (1991) noted about the mental health of the teacher and performance. One female junior teacher observed that for the teacher to remain enthusiastic year after year, head-teachers and parents must implement strategies that enhance the mental health of the teaching staff such as opportunities for professional growth and support systems [financially and psychologically]. This was in conformity with observations from similar studies on the mental health of the teaching staff (Eberhard et al., 2000; Terry, 1997).

The findings also revealed that widespread dissatisfaction by teachers could be due to teacher stress and the best single predictor that a teacher would plan to quit teaching. Job-related stress was due to the head-teacher's leadership behaviour. In all the schools I visited, there were high and low levels of teacher stress and teachers who reported greater stress were less satisfied with

their job and less committed to tasks like training learners in writing skills. A young male teacher in his early 20s noted that the work stress was too much to handle and would immediately quit should a new opportunity present itself and had little interest in imparting writing skills.

4.3 Ways of improving the writing skills of students in Kampala Central

The second objective of this study was to examine the ways of improving the writing skills of students in Kampala Central. To achieve the stated objective, the study was guided by the following research question: which ways can improve the writing skills of students in Kampala Central? The data collected and analyzed under this question indicated that improving writing skills needed a multifaceted approach (e.g., by paying attention to counseling, motivation, salaries and stipends).

The study found out that an attempt should be made to align teacher salaries with other fields as an ideal intervention to make the education profession more attractive. This observation concurs with what Ballou and Podgursky (1997) noted about intervention measures to make teaching more attractive especially in poor rural areas. A veteran German teacher in his 50s noted that teaching would be very interesting and satisfying if only salaries and benefits were like those of other professionals such as doctors, engineers or even politicians. However, he was skeptical whether that government was willing or had the capacity.

The study revealed that in order to improve on the writing skills of students schools should offer scholarships or bursaries to students and stipends for teachers in areas that are typically hard to reach. This observation is in line with the findings of the U.S. Department of Education (2000); Kirby and Grissmer (1993) about ways of improving teacher conditions in the USA by providing stipends to teach in low-income rural areas is a potential solution to problems such as poor writing skills.

There were teachers who suggested the provision of relocation costs and providing teachers with local merchant coupons and medical insurance as part of the recruitment process to make teaching attractive. These findings are similar to several studies that have indicated a link between salary and benefits and the teacher's satisfaction and level of commitment (Choy et al., 1993;

Faupel, 1992; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 1997; National Education Association, 1997a; Page & Page, 1982; Perie & Baker, 1997). A junior teacher noted that teachers should be given concessions such as discounts, food coupons and holiday packages among others to make the profession meaningful and not a punishment.

The study finding revealed that there was need for mentoring programs and in-service training to improve on teacher performance and satisfaction. Most of the interviewed teachers suggested a professional development plan on the basis that teachers needed support and guidance in gaining higher self-confidence and satisfaction in their work a point also noted by (Darling-Hammond & Sclan 1996:91) about teacher induction, support, evaluation, retention and job satisfaction in the USA.

The study also revealed that counseling should also be made part of the induction process of the new teachers as one way of reassuring them and creating job satisfaction in their work. Several of the interviewed teachers noted that on several occasions they suffer mental breakdown or burnout but have no professional counselor to talk to them. This was leaving them with less enthusiasm and a low level of energy to teach, a clear sign of job dissatisfaction. This concurs to what Farber (1991); Eberhard et al. (2000); Terry (1997) noted about the mental health of the teacher and job satisfaction.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research. The first section demonstrates the summary according to the objectives of the study; the second section is about the conclusions based on the summary. The third section gives recommendations drawn from the conclusions. The fourth section puts forward possible areas for further research.

5.2 Summary

This study investigated the writing skills of secondary school students as a correlate to teacher competence in Kampala Central. This was after the realization of the role of writing skills in academics and various domains. The study was qualitative and conducted using a case study design and purposive sampling technique. The data were collected using interviews and observations [for primary data] and documents analysis [for secondary data]. The data collected were qualitatively analysed by the literal description and narration of the subject matter (i.e., content analysis of the emerging issues) followed by the making of authentic conclusions and quoting extensively in verbatim. The summary of the findings below relate to the objectives of the study.

First, the study revealed that the writing skills of students in Kampala Central were determined by multifaceted factors that included remuneration of teachers, teacher training, external forces, workplace conditions, in-service training, motivation to teach and emotional factors.

Secondly, the study revealed that improving writing skills needed a multifaceted approach (e.g., by paying attention to counseling, motivation, salaries and stipends).

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the summary of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

First, the study concludes by noting that the writing skills of students in Kampala Central will for some time be of mediocrity not until the factors that influence performance of the teacher are redressed by the government, education planners and policy makers. The mediocrity will continue not until those who wield influence and power realise the importance of teachers and education in nation building.

Secondly, the study concludes by noting that improving the writing skills of students in Kampala Central calls for a multifaceted approach that incorporates all stake holders such as teachers, parents, students, government policy makers and syllabus designers who should come up with a formula that addresses the plight of education and teachers in Uganda.

5.4 Recommendations

In view of the above conclusions, the researcher made the following recommendations:

First, the study recommends that education planners and policy makers should consider job satisfaction of teachers as a major determinant in the efficacy and efficiency of the teacher to guide the teaching-learning process including writing skills. This calls for incentives, policies and programs that enhance the esteem, confidence and satisfaction of teachers (e.g., scholarships or loans for the teachers' education, stipends for teaching in areas typically hard to reach, discounts, coupons and medical insurance among others).

Secondly, the study recommends the alignment of teacher salaries with other fields as an ideal intervention to make the education profession attractive. Counseling should be made part of the induction process of the new teachers as one way of reassuring them and creating satisfaction in their work. Incentives that give teachers esteem, confidence and satisfaction such as scholarships or loans for the teachers' education, discounts, medical insurance and stipends among others should be considered.

5.4.1 Recommended areas for further research

More research should be done on the followings:

1. Writing skills as a correlate to family background in Kampala.
2. Writing skills and academic performance in Kampala.

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APPENDIX A

Interview guide for key informants

1. For how long have you been teaching?
2. As a teacher are you satisfied with the quality of the writing skills of your students?
3. What makes you to be satisfied or dissatisfied? Whom do you praise or portion blame to?
4. How do you see the future of writing skills in this country?
5. What you think are the factors that affect the writing skills?
7. What is the way forward for improving the writing skills?

APPENDIX B

Observation checklist

1. School infrastructure (e.g., classrooms, library, etc.)
2. Working environment (e.g., teachers houses)
3. Behaviors or conduct of teachers, pupils and parents
4. Number of teachers versus the number of students
5. Internet facilities
6. Time table
7. Subject notes
8. Syllabuses