

The effect of Style and Structure of Functional Writing on Students' Performance in Kiswahili in Kenya. A Case of Elgeyo-Marakwet County.

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ABSTRACT : Functional writing has been given prominence in the Secondary school Kiswahili syllabus in Kenya. This paper reports on study that was undertaken in 2020 that investigated the influence of functional writing skills on students' performance of Kiswahili in Elgeyo-Marakwet County. The need for this study was based on the fact that functional writing is an area faced with challenges. The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of functional writing skills on students' performance in Kiswahili. Theoretical framework was based on Jane Emig's Process Theory of Composition writing (1971). The study employed descriptive research design and data was collected using the questionnaire, observation and document analysis. The area of study was Elgeyo-Marakwet County. The target population included form four students and teachers of Kiswahili in 37 out of the 122 secondary schools. From this population, stratified, purposive and simple random sampling was used to get a sample. There were 9852 Form Four students in secondary schools in Elgeyo – Marakwet County as at October, 2020. During the entire study 579 students in Form Four class and 35 teachers of Kiswahili participated. The study used both primary and secondary data. Lecturers in School of Education at the University of Eldoret determined the validity of the research thesis instruments. Reliability was tested using test-retest method in four secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County. Questionnaire was the main source of primary data. Data from the questionnaire was presented in frequency tables and percentages using descriptive statistics, narrative and verbatim. The research established that inappropriate style and structure, incorrect use of language, negative attitude of learners as well as poor teaching strategies of functional writing skills have a major impact on students' performance of Kiswahili in secondary schools. The findings will be used for reference by other researchers and it will also give guidance on how to improve in the writing of functional essays. The study recommended that teachers should emphasize on the style and structure, appropriate choice of vocabulary when teaching and evaluating learners on functional writing.

KEY WORDS: *Style and Structure; Functional Writing; Kiswahili Language; Performance.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION.

Functional writing which is the subject of study is a vital item in communication and instruction. Functional writing is a significant skill in Kiswahili. Kenya Institute of Education syllabus (2002) lists functional writing known as *Utungaji wa Kiuamilifu* in Kiswahili under writing skill. Functional writing is taught across the classes in secondary schools from Form One up to Form Four. Some of the compositions recur in different classes. From the arrangement of the four basic language skills in the syllabus it is assumed that the teacher is teaches writing after listening, speaking and reading skills. Functional Writing is listed under the writing; it is not only an examination item but also a life skill aspect.

Wahiga and Wamitila (2003) note that functional writing is a major writing skill. Its' writing is aimed at performing a task or function such as warning, cautioning, giving directions among others. It is therefore imperative that the learner gets proper guidance on how to write this type of composition. They also note that it is important to punctuate the composition appropriately and use correct grammar so as to convey the intended message. The writer is expected to understand the intention of the composition that he/she wants to write.

The Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.) Kiswahili Secondary Teacher's guide (2006) outlines that functional writing be taught in Form One, Form Two, Form Three and Form Four under writing skills. These are skills that a learner requires in life even if he/she completes studies at Form Four level. It is essential that the learner internalizes the skill of writing different types of functional texts such as warnings, notices, memos, curriculum vitae, minutes, reports, announcements and even letters.

Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC 2006) outlines functional writing as a compulsory question in a Kiswahili paper coded 102/1. This paper comprises four questions for testing under formative and summative evaluation at secondary school level. A candidate is required to answer two questions. Question one is a compulsory question and candidates can choose one out of the remaining three questions so as to answer a total of two questions. The expectations attached to the questions include but not limited to the following aspects: the correct format, good flow of ideas, issues which are mentioned or listed, should be explained and developed fully. Themes should be relevant to the topic or title of the question given and should be clearly communicated. There is also need of using grammar correctly. The language being used should be interesting and captivating so that it captures and sustains the interest of the reader. The writer can employ stylistic devices such as idioms, sayings, proverbs, similes and even synecdoche so as to make the composition interesting.

Besides that, Turbill and Wendy (2006) give some basics of writing and state as follows: Effective writers need to be confident writers. They need to understand that writing is life empowering and therefore worthy learning; writers need to understand the roles of the audience and purpose. The audience plays an important role in shaping the different types of genres of writing. This basic of writing is significant since the audience is the consumer of the written text; effective writers need to have an understanding of why it is important to learn to spell, punctuate and understand appropriate use of grammatical features.

Shorofat (2007) defines functional writing, as opposed to academic and creative writing, as that kind of writing which aims at conveying a specific, direct and clear message to a specific audience. It includes several areas such as writing instructions, formal letters, notes, invitations, advertisements and reports.

Functional writing is an essential skill as it is a skill of writing which is used to perform a function. It is a life skill since it can be used to write items for use in daily and real life spheres. For example under functional writing one can attain skills of writing minutes, reports, speeches, letters and memos among others. For learners to realize good performance in functional writing, it calls for full involvement in continuous evaluation by both the learners and teachers so as to ensure its acquisition and development.

Mahmoud (2014) in his thesis explains that functional writing relates mainly to communicative-pragmatic uses of English while writing to accomplish some realistic goals or needs. That is writing activities carried out resemble those done in real-life for practical purposes. Hence functional writing is about applying writing to real examples, situations and tasks, and accordingly, learners should produce realistic and meaningful documents. It is also about 'quality' rather than 'quantity' and learners should be able to work on a document until they are satisfied with it.

It further outlines that writing thus becomes an effective means of communication with others not merely a means of displaying academic knowledge. Functional writing is strongly enhanced when instruction is explicitly designed to address learners' specific needs and objectives. It becomes a main device for self-expression, shaping ideas, and convincing others. (Brown 1994, Nunah 1999, Salem 2013).

Daelyn (2016) says that functional writing is the practice of expressing specific information meant to mirror real-life scenarios such as how to make or do something or telling what happened in a specific situation. Functional writing often turns a complex subject into something that is more understandable to the reader. Teachers can help students master this type of writing by assigning various functional writing activities.

Koross and Murunga (2017) explain that functional writing refers to essays that are used for specific functions in life. This kind of writing can be used for official or unofficial functions. Functional writing can be used to relay some information, give instructions or directions to readers or listeners, letter writing, minute writing, writing of telegrams, lists, dialogue, speeches, recipes, diaries, memos, warnings and notices, advertisements, filling of forms, questionnaire and even short messages on mobile phones. These are important skills that learners require even after completing school as they assist them in communication of different information.

Walibora and Wang'endo (2018) define functional writing as the kind of writing that has the objectives of performing a specific task such as relaying some information, warning or even cautioning. They further outline the expectations when writing this kind of composition as follows: the writer must clearly understand the objectives of the question, have cohesion of ideas, explain the themes exhaustively, use interesting and clear language, punctuation marks have to be used appropriately, to creatively write the composition and use vocabulary that will be easily understood by the reader and also employ the use of stylistic devices that will make the composition interesting and captivating.

While marking Kiswahili composition, during both formative and summative evaluation, the examiners are guided by a marking scheme which outlines four major elements: themes, vocabulary and its usage, style and structure as well as flow and cohesion of ideas. KNEC (2019) defines themes as the message that is being discussed, explained or narrated by the writer in relation to the topic or question set. The writer is expected to give the message that is original and is creatively written. The examiner therefore assesses the themes and determines if they are above average, average or below average before awarding marks in the section. Another element in the marking scheme is on vocabulary and its usage. In this section, the candidate is expected to put emphasis on the choice of vocabulary, correct grammar and spelling. The vocabulary which is chosen and used should be related to the topic. The candidate is expected to make appropriate choice of vocabulary that answers

the question asked. Besides the vocabulary, the candidate is expected to use correct grammar considering its different aspects such as tenses, the noun classes, punctuation marks, correct use of capital and small letters, the classification of words and the correct sentence structures. Another element is style and structure which give the composition the form and appearance. This is the section that is used to distinguish and differentiate types of functional texts from other compositions. This aspect of style and structure gives unique characteristics of the functional writing. The fourth element is flow and cohesion of ideas in a composition. It is expected that a composition shows a good flow and cohesion of ideas from the beginning of the composition until the end. Ideally, a well-developed composition text should display the above elements.

The functional writing skills therefore have to be taught by the teacher adhering to some teaching strategies. The teacher should clearly state what the students should know and be able to do at the end of the lesson. KIE (2002) refers to this as the specific objectives of the lesson. A teacher can work on how students can improve in any subject by explicitly teaching them how to use the relevant strategies. The teacher should give guided practice before asking them to do exercises independently. Briggs (2014) acknowledges the role of a teacher in learning and notes, "The teacher is the centre of attention at all times leading each activity calling on students one by one to respond and talking for nearly the whole class. In this type of learning the teacher is seen as the authority or expert, the central figure in the classroom who transmits knowledge to students."

The teacher should tell them how to answer questions and if possible explain the terminologies to be used. This is where the teacher should explain the major aspects of functional essay writing such as themes, vocabulary and its usage, the style and structure of functional essay as well as the flow and cohesion.

It is therefore expected that as candidates write functional compositions, an aspect of uniformity should be exhibited in themes, style and structure and language use. Candidates who do not adhere to these requirements are bound to score low marks in functional writing. These aspects are important in functional essays as they are supposed to be clearly displayed in the essays.

Despite the importance attached to Functional writing its' results in the national exams country wide have not been good. KNEC (2020) reports that a large percentage of the candidates scored below 9 out of 40 in Kiswahili Composition examinations of 2019. It further explains that analysis of the candidates work showed that most of the candidates did not answer the question on functional writing appropriately. This therefore implies that results in functional compositions affect the overall performance of students in Kiswahili because of the integrated approach of grading. This is the kind of grading whereby the average mark of the three papers of Kiswahili is given as the final mark for Kiswahili results. This in turn affects the candidate's overall performance in KCSE as Kiswahili is one of the major subjects in group one together with English and Mathematics and is therefore used for calculating students' performance to get an overall mean grade. KNEC (2018) states that the National mean score of Kiswahili in KCSE in 2017 was 38.99%. This mark is a reflection of performance in KCSE means score and grade respectively.

KNEC (2018) states that the National mean score of Kiswahili in KCSE in 2017 was 38.99%. This mark is a reflection of performance in KCSE means score and grade respectively. Functional writing being a compulsory section affects the overall performance of Kiswahili subject.

The question on functional writing has been a major challenge to the candidates. The KNEC (2020) giving reports of 2012 to 2019 on the KCSE examinations have shown that performance in this question has been poor as displayed by the major deviations of the learners' marks from the mean. The table 1.1 shows how candidates performed in Kiswahili paper 102/1 where functional writing is tested. (Refer to table 1.1). This table shows the national performance of learners' deviation from the mean score in the three Kiswahili papers in the subject.

Table 1.1. Performance in Kiswahili in KCSE Examinations in Kenya (2012-2019)

Year	Paper code	Candidature	Maximum marks	Average	Standard deviation
2012	102/1	433,886	40	10.43	3.63
	102/2		80	29.06	10.77
	102/3		80	32.14	15.15
			200	71.62	25.71
2013	102/1	445,555	40	18.46	5.44
	102/2		80	29.92	12.68
	102/3		80	34.82	14.92
			200	83.19	29.77
2014	102/1	482,122	40	20.17	5.26
	102/2		80	32.27	12.60
	102/3		80	42.93	15.81
			200	95.36	29.88
	102/1		40	20.86	5.19

2015	102/2	521,159	80	36.12	13.50
	102/3		80	38.80	15.38
			200	95.76	31.02
2016	102/1	571,176	40	18.23	5.53
	102/2		80	34.11	13.83
	102/3		80	25.67	12.87
			200	77.97	29.07
2017	102/1	610,392	40	18.84	5.23
	102/2		80	25.45	11.79
	102/3		80	25.15	13.42
			200	69.43	27.49
2018	102/1	659,465	40	16.98	4.82
	102/2		80	27.22	10.88
	103/3		80	22.20	11.95
			200	66.40	24.96
2019	102/1	694,982	40	19.88	5.43
	102/2		80	36.50	12.64
	102/3		80	21.08	12.64
			200	77.46	28.03

(Source: KNEC reports of 2014, 2018 and 2019)

Due to this situation, it therefore called for an investigation to find out how Functional writing skills affects students' performance in Kiswahili.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Functional writing in Kiswahili is a compulsory section in Kiswahili Paper coded 102/1 by the Kenya National Examinations Council. Despite the great significance attached to this section, students' performance in Kiswahili remains poor. The problem of poor performance has really become a major concern among teachers, students, parents and education officers as well as the general public. Performance in functional writing in Kiswahili has an effect on the general performance in Kiswahili subject because of the integrated approach of grading. Kiswahili subject comprises three papers which are tested separately but the final mark is an average mark of the three papers.

KNEC (2018) report on 2017 KCSE examinations show that the section on functional writing contributed to poor performance in Kiswahili. The KNEC report (2018) shows that most candidates of KCSE (2017) did not write a letter to the editor as expected. It states, "The candidates did not display the expected format of a letter to the editor. Most of the compositions that were written by candidates did not emphasize on the expected themes. Many candidates lacked creativity and were not able to discuss and explain the themes expected of them hence not developing the topic. It was noted that many students do not read extensively. This made them to be handicapped in answering questions on emerging issues." This report therefore explained the weakness displayed by the learners in writing this kind of composition.

(KNEC 2020) on the year 2019 KCSE Examination Report states that the results of Kiswahili composition have been fluctuating. The evaluation of the learners' compositions indicates that the students do not use enriched language. Besides that, the report further states that most of the candidates scored lower marks than the expected mark of 19 out of 40. Further evaluation of the candidates work shows that most of the candidates did not answer the functional compositions adequately It states: "Tathmini ya kazi za watahini wa pia imeonyesha kwamba watahiniwa wengi hawamudu tungo za kiuamilifu. This statement is translated as; "The analysis of the candidates' work has shown that majority of the candidates did not tackle the functional composition adequately."

For instance the functional composition question of KCSE Examination of 2019 was stated as follows: "Wewe ni mkuu wa Elimu katika kaunti ndogo ya Tuangaze. Andika hotuba utakayowatolea Maafisa wa Elimu na Walimu Wakuu kuhusu umuhimu wa kustawisha vyo vinyoyotoa mafunzo ya kiufundi katika eneo lao." The statement is translated as: "You are an Officer –in-Charge of Education in Tuangaze Sub-county. Write a speech that you will present to Education Officers explaining the importance of developing technical institutions in your region." The candidates were expected to write a speech on the importance of technical institutions but the compositions of the candidates showed that majority of the candidates lacked creativity in their work.

Poor performance in functional writing has a major effect on performance in the subject and therefore affects KCSE results in Kiswahili subject and in turn affects the general performance of students in the county.

See Table 1.2 on the KCSE performance of Kiswahili and overall mean grade for Elgeyo-Marakwet County between 2017 and 2019

1.3 Significance of the Study.

The study established the influence of functional writing skills on students' performance in Kiswahili. The study outlined how functional writing should be developed so as to enable the students to write appropriate composition.

Findings of the study were used to give recommendations on the influence of functional writing skills on students' performance in Kiswahili. They will also be used to guide the teachers on the steps to follow when teaching functional writing texts and what can be done to alleviate the problem of poor performance in Functional writing.

In addition the study exposed strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and evaluation of Functional Writing. For this reason therefore the recommendations can be used by educationists to design appropriate methods of instruction in teaching of essential aspects of functional writing in Kiswahili in secondary schools. The study may also create chances of improving performance in English Language generally as it has a close relationship with Kiswahili.

The data generated in this study will also generate new and original knowledge that will be added to the existing knowledge in the area of Functional writing in Kiswahili as well as areas of creative and imaginative writing. Finally the study will also form a base on which other researchers can develop their studies.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on Janet Emig's Theory of Composition of (1971). In the theory Emig says that this is a field of composition studies that focuses on writing as a process rather than a product. Emig explains that the process is centered on the idea that students determine the content of the course by exploring the craft of writing using their own interests, language techniques, voice and freedom, and where students learn what people respond to and what they don't. Classroom activities often include peer work where students themselves are teaching, reviewing, brainstorming and editing.

Emig further observes that students determine the use of language techniques in the writing of composition. This aspect is related to the process of functional writing skills which calls for proper guidance by the teacher to enable the learners to write meaningful compositions conveying the message in the composition. Syntactic knowledge of the learners in Kiswahili grammar plays a very significant role when it comes to functional writing. Learners have to choose vocabulary that can be used to construct meaningful phrases and sentences and this is vital in the functional writing.

This study assessed how functional writing in Kiswahili is a process. Functional writing is taught from Form one to Form Four. Formative evaluation is administered as a way of preparing the learners for the Summative evaluation in form of KCSE Examinations. It is therefore evident that the writing of functional composition requires thorough preparations for one to write a good essay that will enable a student to score high marks. The Functional writing items recur in the syllabus from Form one to Form Four as a way of putting emphasis on the fact that it is a process.

For a candidate to write a good functional composition then he/she needs to be regularly guided by the teacher. It is also mandatory for a learner to have content to enable him/her convey the intended message. The learner is a key person in the writing of functional composition, on whom the delivery of content depends. In writing of the functional composition, the candidate is given a topic and is expected to develop it by raising points about it. This indeed shows that the students determine the content of the composition. The competencies and abilities of the learner in language use are supposed to be seen from the way he/she develops the content in composition.

Emig's views on composition as process will guide the learner to adhere to appropriate style and structure of different functional writing. The style and structure gives the form and appearance of the composition. To achieve this, the learner has to develop different parts of functional writing essays ensuring that the ideas are coherent and flow in a logical and a systematic manner. The researcher therefore looked at the different processes to be adhered to in order to write appropriate functional texts.

2.1 Related Literature.

The aspect of acquisition of functional writing skills in Kiswahili has been looked at by various groups nationally. For example KNEC has on several occasions reported about the poor performance in functional writing. This in turn affects the overall performance in Kiswahili subject.

The KNEC report (2018) observes that Kiswahili 102/1 in which functional writing is tested candidates performed poorly. The reports denote that the challenges in this question are varied such as inappropriate format, language flaws, inadequate and undeveloped themes as well as incoherent ideas. Complaints have been raised on performance in this section. The problem is prevalent in many areas.

(KNEC 2020) on the year 2019 KCSE Examination report states that the analysis of the students' performance in Kiswahili subject shows that most of the candidates do not answer the questions on functional writing adequately. This problem is associated with the students as well as the teacher.

2.2 Style and Structure of Functional Writing.

Some scholars attribute the problem of functional writing skills to style and structure of the functional text, language use, negative attitude towards functional writing and improper teaching strategies. However there is knowledge gap hence the need to carry out this research.

Hornby (2005) defines style as a particular way in which something is done. In the way writing is dressed up (or down) to fit the specific context, purpose or audience. Word choice, sentence fluency and the writer's voice all contribute to the style of a piece of writing.

Literary Devices Editors (2013) say style in writing is a way a writer writes. It is the technique that an individual author uses in his writing. It varies from author to author and depends upon one's syntax, word choice and tone. It can be defined as a 'voice' that readers listen to when they read the work of a writer.

Braun (2015) says that style goes beyond the elements of spelling, grammar and punctuation but writing style is choice of words, sentence structure and paragraph structure used to convey the meaning effectively. This therefore means that style is a significant element in functional writing.

This study looked at style in relation to the way the functional text is written. In instruction and evaluation of functional writing at KCSE level, style covers aspects of how to write the composition to get distinct types of compositions. These types can be expository, descriptive, persuasive and narrative essays. Jes (2016) explains what these types of compositions entail. He says that Expository writing is used when you want to explain or inform, making it very popular style of essays. Generally the writer must first formulate a topic, outline the evidence and further explain the idea to demonstrate a particular point about the topic at hand. In functional writing in Kiswahili one can use report writing (*ripoti*). For example in 2016, KNEC set a KCSE question on Functional composition as follows: "*Wewe ni katibu wa kamati inayochunguza jinsi ya kupambana na tatizo sugu la dawa za kulevya. Andika ripoti ukitoa mapendekezo ya kamati.*" This can be translated as: "You are a secretary of a committee investigating on how to deal with a major problem of drug abuse." Write a report giving suggestions to the committee. In this question the learner was given a statement and from this he/she was expected to write a title, give examples of how to alleviate the problem of drug abuse.

The other type of composition explained by Jes (2016) is Descriptive writing. He says the main purpose of descriptive writing is to describe a subject to form a clear idea in the reader's mind. This writing style draws attention to details to outline the topic. For example in 2017 KNEC KCSE a question on functional writing was stated as: "*Shirika la Kigeni la Tugawanel imeanza kiwanda cha Kutengenezea motafali katika eneobunge lenu. Mwandikie barua Mhariri wa Gazeti la Mzalendo ukitoa maoni yako kuhusu faida na changamoto zinazoweza kutokana na mradi huu.*" This can be translated: A foreign organization, Tugawane has started a factory of manufacturing bricks in your constituency. Write a letter to the Editor-in-Charge of Mzalendo Newspaper giving your opinion on the benefits and challenges that could arise from this project. In this question the learner was expected to discuss advantages and disadvantages of starting such a factory for making bricks in a creative manner.

The third type of composition is persuasive writing. This type of writing allows the writer to take a stance. Rather than objectively explaining a topic or painting a picture for the reader, persuasive writing is used to demonstrate a very specific opinion on a topic. That means attention to word choice is imperative as weak or incorrect word usage can make or break a persuasive essay. Examples of persuasive functional essays are those that are set on debates (*mjadala*).

The types of compositions explained by Jes (2016) are relevant to this study as writing of functional essays perform specific tasks. Style also gives each functional text unique and specific features that distinguish it from another functional essay. Style is therefore an essential aspect that gives functional essay shape and form. Functional essays can be written using different styles such as narration, formal and informal letter writing, memo, reports, minutes, giving direction, questionnaire, writing program of an event.

Style in the writing of a composition also encompasses paragraphing. In the writing of any type of composition, the learner is expected to use the block paragraphs and not the indented ones. While marking KCSE examinations, an examiner assess the type of paragraphs that are used by candidates. A candidate who does not use the block paragraphs is bound to lose marks. The researcher therefore looked at how style in the writing of functional essays affects performance in the essay and hence affects Kiswahili as a subject.

The other essential aspect while writing composition is structure of the composition.

Wehmeier (2005) defines structure as the way in which the parts of something are connected together, arranged or organized. Structure is a particular arrangement of parts. It is the state of being well organized or planned with all the parts linked together. This relates to structure in functional writing where the composition should have distinct paragraphs, parts of a composition such as introduction, main body and conclusion which display coherent ideas.

Graves (2009) says that some of the benefits of legible handwriting include the following: Clearer thought processes for the writer. No longer having to struggle with 'how' of writing, the brain is freed to work on idea formation and composition. The result is better written compositions. Secondly legible handwriting makes easier reading and interpretation for the reader. The reader no longer has to interpret sloppy pen strokes to figure out

what is being said and is able to concentrate on the evaluation of the writer's ideas. In addition, legible handwriting leads to more receptive audiences to the writing. At least one study has shown that easy-to-read documents result in an audience that is more receptive of the ideas that the document presents.

It is therefore essential for the learner to use correct format and structure to write an impressive functional composition. All the aspects of style and structure in a functional writing need to be adhered to as a way of ensuring that the composition is well developed.

Godwin (2014) says. "An effective structure helps your argument to unfold clearly to the reader. You want your response to be focused and progressive, rather than just a jumble of ideas". He further explains that structure deals with how one arranges ideas so that he/she can bring out the central argument of the essay and outline reasons to support the main argument or message. One should decide on a logical order of points in a composition. The writer should also be aware of progression of his/her argument and show how each point links to another. These guidelines on structure can assist learners to write logical and appropriate functional essays which can enable them score high marks in them.

Cooper and Shoolbred (2016) give key structuring conventions to be used in paragraphs as: "Group similar ideas together rather than jumping around; Individual paragraphs should be differentiated typographically that is by indenting or by allowing additional line space between; Each paragraph should make only one main point; Think of paragraphs as mini-essays. They also say that as one who writes an essay should start with a topic sentence to introduce the main point of the paragraph; explain that point further; provide evidence for the point; interpret/analyze the evidence; then summarize the point and indicate how it links into your overall argument; Each paragraph should link to the next using transition words or phrases – such as 'alternatively,' 'consequently,' 'as a result'; 'furthermore...' The paragraphs should be placed in a logical and consistent order. Play around with them until you get the best flow. They should feel progressive rather than list-like."

The KNEC marking scheme (2019) prepared for marking functional writing in Kiswahili gives the characteristics of structure in composition. Structure is simply explained as the appearance of the composition. The appearance of a composition is a surface features which can easily be seen by an examiner such as legible handwriting, cleanliness and tidiness, having a title of the composition and the correct paragraphing. As concerns handwriting it is important that students embrace legible handwriting in their functional writing.

3.1 Methods.

This study employed Descriptive Research Design where the researcher investigated the influence of functional writing skills on students' performance in Kiswahili. Data was collected from teachers and students drawn from 37 secondary schools. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling methods were used to obtain a sample of 579 form four students and 35 teachers of Kiswahili. This study collected primary data through the use of questionnaire, observation schedule and secondary data from the documents. The research instruments used aimed at establishing the effect of style and structure of functional writing on performance in Kiswahili. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics, narrative and verbatim.

4.1 Results and Discussions.

The study sought to find out the effect of style and structure of functional writing on performance in Kiswahili. The findings were obtained from the students' and teachers' questionnaire, observation and document analysis from the students' insha notebooks. The students and the teachers were asked to respond to various items on style and structure in functional Writing.

4.2 Style and Structure

The researcher assessed how style and structure of functional writing affects performance in Kiswahili. Questionnaire on this aspect of style and structure was administered to the students and teachers of Kiswahili. The questionnaire administered to the students had five questions which were responded to. The first aspect required the students to explain what they understood by the term functional writing (*Utungaji wa Kiuamilifu*) in Kiswahili.

They responded as shown in table 4.1

Table 4.1 Definition of Functional Writing

The definition of functional writing in Kiswahili	Frequency	%
Correct answer	140	24.2%
Incorrect answer	363	62.7%
No Response	76	13.1%
TOTAL	579	100%

As concerns the definition of functional writing (*utungaji wa kiuamilifu*) the responses were as shown in table 4.5: 24.2 % (N=140) gave the correct definition of functional writing, 62.7% (N=363) did not give the correct definition of functional writing whereas 13.1% (N=76) of the students did not answer the question on the definition of functional writing. This implies that majority of the students did not know the type of compositions listed as functional writing and therefore could not define functional writing. This study therefore points out that majority of the students do not know what functional writing entails. This also implies that most of the students cannot answer the question on functional writing well since they do not know what it is.

The students were asked to list any five compositions that are classified as functional writing in Kiswahili. The responses were tabulated as follows:

Table 4.2 List of Functional Compositions.

Number of functional writing compositions	Frequency	%
5	89	15.4%
4	100	17.3%
3	47	8.1%
2	312	53.9%
1	21	3.6%
0	10	1.7%
TOTAL	579	100%

The other aspect of style and structure was to list at least five types of functional compositions. They answered as shown in table 4.2: 15.4 % (N=89) of the students gave five types of functional compositions, 17.3 % (N=100) of the students listed four types of functional writing, 8.1% (N=47) of the students listed three types of functional compositions, 53.9% (N=312) of the students listed two types of functional compositions only while 3.6 % (N=21) students listed one type of functional writing and 1.7% (N=10) of the students did not list any functional composition. The table 4.2 shows that majority of the students were able to give only two types of functional compositions out of the five that were expected. This implies that majority of the students could not answer questions on functional writing effectively as they do not know the types of functional compositions yet the KIE (2002) lists more than 24 types of functional writing.

Besides the types of functional writing compositions, the students were asked to name the type of paragraphing style that they use in writing functional compositions and they stated as shown in Figure 4.1

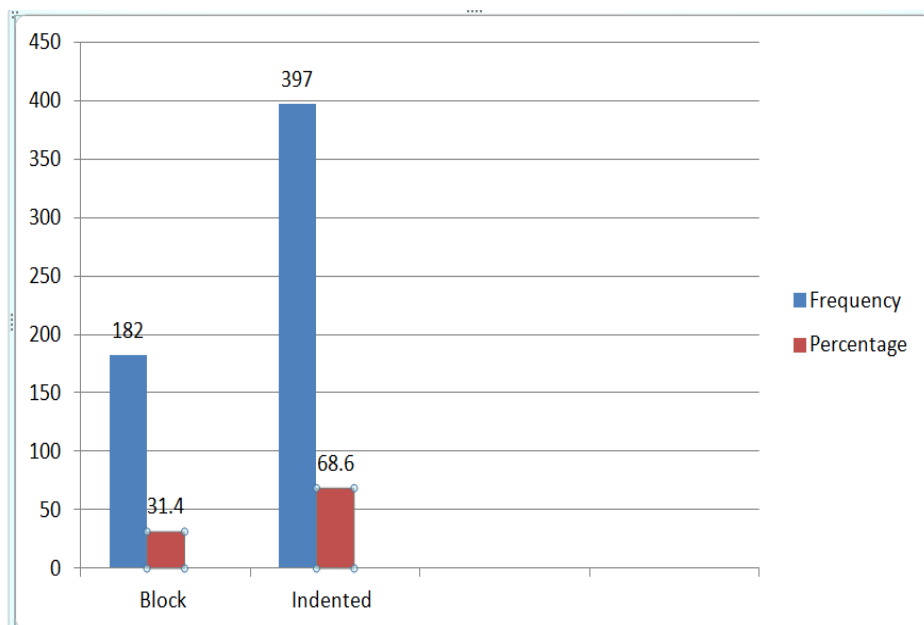


Figure 4.1 Type of Paragraphing

(Source: Students' questionnaire)

Another aspect of style and structure was the type of paragraphing. From Figure 4.1: 31.4 % (N=182) of the students used the block paragraphs when writing their functional compositions while 68.6 % (N=397) of the students used the indented paragraphs. This study therefore points out that majority of the students used the

indented paragraphs in the writing of functional compositions. This study therefore points out that majority of the students did not adhere to the usage of the block paragraphs as required in the writing of functional compositions based on the KCSE marking scheme guidelines. The study also established that some students had challenges in using the appropriate paragraphing style hence making their work untidy. This therefore implies that candidates scored low marks in functional writing essays because of not adhering to the appropriate paragraphing hence leading to poor performance in the question.

The students were asked to list any three challenges that they encountered when writing functional texts. They responded as tabulated in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Three challenges learners encounter in functional writing.

Challenge	YES	%	NO	%
	Frequency		Frequency	
Format	347	59.9%	232	40.1%
Paragraphing	437	75.5%	142	24.5%
Cohesion of ideas	374	64.5%	205	35.4%

The students listed the challenges they encountered while writing functional compositions: 59.9 % (N=347) agreed that they faced the challenge of format while 40.1 % (N=232) said that they did not face the challenge of format of the functional composition. This therefore shows that majority of the students did not adhere to format of functional writing. This concurs with the study of Jes (2016) who says that style gives each functional text unique and specific features. This therefore implies that a student who encounters the challenge of format cannot write a specific functional composition. Some of the students' compositions showed that there were challenges of adhering to the format of writing an official letter.

The same table 4.3 also shows that 75.5% (N=337) of the students agreed that they faced the challenge of paragraphing while 24.5 % (N=142) of the students said that they did not encounter a challenge of paragraphing. The results therefore show that majority of the students had challenges of using the recommended paragraphing. The same 4.3 table reveals that 64.5% (N= 374) of the students agreed that they encountered a challenge of having cohesion of ideas in the functional compositions but 35.4 % (N=205) of the students said that they did not have a challenge of cohesion of ideas. The students were asked to discuss the negative effects of Corona Virus Disease of 2019 on education but the ideas that were given by the writers did not have a good flow. Most of the points that were given did not unfold sequentially and logically but one paragraph had different ideas that were not clearly explained. This therefore implies that majority of the students did not write functional compositions with coherent ideas. Table 4.3 therefore reveals that majority of the students face a challenge of format in functional writing.

The students gave their views on how handwriting affects functional writing. The effect was viewed to be negative as presented in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Effect of Handwriting on functional writing

Effect of handwriting on functional writing	Frequency	%
Incomprehensible work	123	21.2
Misreading the content	78	13.5
Lower rating	256	44.2
Interfere with conveyance of the message	122	21.1
Total	579	100

Students also said that handwriting had a negative effect on functional writing. 21.2% (N=123) said that illegible handwriting made the composition to be incomprehensible. Additionally, 13.5% (N=78) of the students agreed that poor handwriting makes the content to be misread, 44.2 % (N=256) said that illegible handwriting makes the student to get lower marks in the composition. On the other hand, 21.1 % (N=122) of the students said that illegible handwriting can interfere with the message being conveyed to the reader. This implies that illegible handwriting makes the learner to score low marks in the functional compositions. The KCSE marking scheme of 2018 shows that illegible handwriting affects clarity of the message and in turn affects performance in functional writing.

The teachers responded on the objective of style and structure. The teachers were asked if they adhered to some aspects of style and structure while teaching functional writing skills. They responded as stated in Table 4.5

Table 4.5. Level of adherence to aspects of style and structure

Aspect of style and structure	YES		NO	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Format of the composition	30	85.7	5	14.3
Legible handwriting	8	22.9	27	77.1
Cleanliness and tidiness in the composition	10	28.6	25	71.4
Paragraphing of the composition	9	25.7	26	74.3
Title of the essay	5	14.3	30	85.7
Flow and cohesion of ideas	14	40	21	60

The teachers of Kiswahili gave their views on the level of adherence to the aspects of style and structure while teaching functional writing. 85.7% (N=30) of the teachers agreed that they adhered to the aspect of format in functional writing when teaching but 14.3% (N=5) of teachers said they did not adhere to the aspect of format in functional writing when teaching; 22.9% (N=8) of the teachers put emphasis on the aspect of legible handwriting in functional composition while 77.1% (N=27) of the teachers did not insist on the legibility of handwriting while writing the functional composition. This was contrary to the views of Graves (2009) who elaborates on the benefits of legible handwriting. Graves says that legible handwriting makes it easier for the reader to interpret the ideas being conveyed.

Another aspect of style and structure was concerning cleanliness and tidiness when writing the functional texts: 28.6% (N=10) of the teachers said that they insisted on the issue of cleanliness and tidiness while 71.4% (N=25) of the teachers did not emphasize on cleanliness and tidiness of the functional composition. Untidy work denies a student a chance to score high marks in a composition.

A title of an essay is also another aspect of style and structure in functional writing: 14.3% (N=5) of the teachers adhered to the issue of an essay having a title but 85.7% (N=30) did not insist on the functional composition having a title. A title of a composition is construed as a summary of the message in the composition. Wilson (2013) notes that a title is everything in writing. He says that the main purpose of a title is to garner attention and entice people to start reading your post. This is why the words that you use and how you craft your title is vital to the success of your post. It is also true that a title attracts readership and gives some insight on ideas that a reader should expect in an essay. A title gives a summary of the content in the writing. From the results, it implies that majority of the candidates did not give titles for their functional writing essays and this therefore led to the scoring of low marks in the composition.

The element of flow and cohesion of ideas is another aspect of style and structure: 40% (N=14) of the teachers agreed that functional writing should have a flow and cohesion of ideas but 60% (N=21) of the teachers did not insist on the aspect of flow and cohesion of ideas in the students' functional compositions. Cohesion of ideas in a composition shows that the candidate understands and has internalized what he or she is writing about.

From table 4.5, it implies that majority of the teachers did not emphasize on the legibility of the handwriting in functional writing. The study also shows that majority of the teachers do not put emphasis on the functional composition having a title. The study also shows that the issue of proper paragraphing was not adhered to by majority of the teachers. This therefore concurs with the findings of Onchera and Manyasi (2013) who found out those teachers have a different understanding about the teaching of functional writing skills. Poor performance in functional writing was a result of majority of the teachers not emphasizing on some aspects of style and structure.

The teachers also gave their opinions on how the aspects of style and structure affect functional writing: 100% (N=35) teachers agreed that adherence to aspects of style and structure as format and legible handwriting make the composition to be clear and easy for marking. This shows that it is essential for the teachers to adhere to aspects of style and structure when teaching to enable the students to perform well in functional writing.

The teachers also listed errors they found in the students' compositions when marking them. See table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Errors in students' functional compositions

Errors in the composition	YES		NO	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Wrong paragraphing	27	77.1	8	22.9%
Wrong structure	20	57.1	15	42.9%
Illegible handwriting	23	65.7	12	34.3%
Untidy work	30	85.7	5	14.3%

Teachers also noted that there were some errors related to style and structure in the students' compositions: 77.1% (N=27) of the teachers said that the students' compositions had errors of wrong paragraphing while 22.9% (N=8) of the teachers said the students' functional compositions did not have errors on paragraphing; 57.1% (N=20) of the teachers identified errors on the structure of the functional writing while 42.9% (N=15) of the teachers said that there were no errors of structure in the students' functional compositions; 65.7% (N=23) of the teachers observed that some of the students committed errors of illegible handwriting while 34.3% (N=13) of the teachers said that the students' composition did not have errors of illegible handwriting; 85.7% (N=30) of the teachers noted that some students had untidy work while 14.3% (N=5) of the teachers said that the students' functional compositions were tidy. This therefore implies that the errors of paragraphing, cohesion of ideas, handwriting and untidiness have a negative effect on functional writing. 77.1% (N=27) of the teachers agreed that errors in style and structure make the composition difficult to mark and to interpret what the student is communicating in the composition. In conclusion, the findings implied that style and structure of the functional writing should be adhered to enable candidates to write logical and appropriate functional writing.

5.1 Conclusions and Recommendations.

The study established that 53.9% (N=312) of the students could not distinguish the functional writing from creative writing. It also established that 68.6% (N=397) of the students used block paragraphing while writing functional compositions. It also showed that 40.1% of the students had challenges in adhering to the format of functional writing. The study also established that illegible handwriting was a cause of the student scoring low marks in functional writing in Kiswahili. The study also established that untidy compositions can lead to a writer losing some marks in the composition. It is therefore clear that students did not adhere to the requirements of style and structure of functional writing hence scoring low marks in the question. The study also established that style and structure are essential in functional writing. The style and structure give distinct features of the functional writing. Though the aspect of style and structure are significant, most learners did not adhere to it hence scoring low marks in functional writing and Kiswahili in general. This in turn affected their performance in Kiswahili.

Based on the findings, the study recommended that the students should adhere to the specific structure and style of functional writing. Teachers should constantly guide learners on the format of different functional writing. The teachers should also guide learners to identify different types of functional writing texts so as to answer questions correctly. They should use the guidelines outlined in the KICD and KNEC syllabi respectively. Clear interpretation of the syllabi by the teachers will enable the learners to write functional texts with appropriate formats.

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