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**SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS' CLASSROOM
PRACTICES AND STUDENTS' ACQUISITION OF FUNCTIONAL
WRITING SKILLS: A CASE OF KIAMBU COUNTY: KENYA**

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Secondary school english
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DECLARATION

I declare that this project is my original work and has not been presented in any other university/institution for consideration of any certificate. This research has been complemented by referenced sources duly acknowledged. Where text, data (including spoken words) graphics pictures or table have been borrowed from other sources, including the internet, these are specifically accredited and referenced cited using the current APA system and in accordance with anti-plagiarism regulations.



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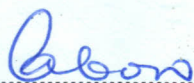
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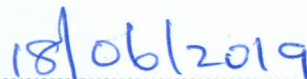
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my beloved departed parents Michael Kamau Chege and Eunice Kabui Kamau for bearing me and forcefully taking me to school and ensuring I worked hard.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation

ABSTRACT

Students' competence in any field is highly determined by the experiences they are exposed to by their teachers. Teachers of English in Kenya, especially those tasked with teaching of writing, may not be employing the best practices in teaching functional writing according to reports by the Kenya national examinations council. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to describe teacher classroom practices and their implication on students' acquisition of functional writing skills in Githunguri Sub County in Kiambu County. The objectives of this research were: to describe teacher classroom practices, to describe the nature of classroom talk and find out challenges that teachers of English face in teaching functional writing. The target population of the study was 40 government secondary schools, and 90 teachers of English and 11562 students in the county. The sample composed of 15 schools randomly selected, making 37% of the population. Five teachers from five schools were purposively selected those teaching English form 1 and 3 of English for observation, while two teachers from each school were interviewed on challenges in functional writing teaching making a total of 30 teachers and 300 form 2 students, 20 from each school, to respond to the questionnaire. A naturalistic enquiry design and discourse analysis was adopted for the study. The study was based on Vygotsky's theory of constructivism (1978). Data from observation was analyzed through content analysis, where labelling and classification of common themes was done and tape recording was transcribed and patterns identified, while data from interviews was coded and themes established. Numerical data collected from document analysis and questionnaires was presented in percentages and tables. The bulk of the data was analyzed through detailed narrative description of what was observed in the classrooms. It was found that most teachers' classroom practices were teacher controlled and geared to memorization, recall and students spent bulk of their lesson time listening to teachers talk with little student-student talk. Challenges teachers faced in teaching functional writing included a wide syllabus, a high teaching load, lack of students' interest in writing and low use of computers and the internet to ease writing. The study concluded that teachers should use more student centered practices, let student talk in class and involve group work.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, assumptions of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study. It also presents the theoretical framework, conceptual framework and definition of key terms.

1.2 Background to the Study

Education is a vital component in the development of any country because it equips the citizens with the required skills, attitude and knowledge. These, consequently, improve the occupational levels and earnings of the population as asserted by Aromi and Alshumrani, (2014) in a study of education for knowledge among Arabian countries. It's for this reason that education receives among the highest budgetary allocation across the globe. For instance, Canada allocates 12.7 percent, The United States 17.3 percent, The United Arab Emirates 22.5 percent, South Africa spends 18.5 percent of its GDP on education while Kenya's allocates 27.3 percent (Majgaard, & Mingat, (2012). A large proportion of this allocation is used in curriculum implementation by teachers. It has been found that no education system can succeed without quality teachers, and though there are other factors that influence learning such as the child background and adequacy of school facilities, the most critical factor is the teacher (Stronge, 2007).

There are many dimensions of quality education such as availability of enough classrooms, competitive per capita expenditure, high retention and transitional rates,

enhanced teacher training and smaller class sizes among others (Wenglinsky 2003) but what happens in the classroom has recently become a concern of many researchers since the success in education is a product of the efforts that students and teachers expend daily in the classroom, (Munroe,2004).Education research has focused on identifying the best curriculum, coming up with better textbooks, adopting more innovative instructional methods and even hiring the most qualified teachers in the hope that a combination of such solutions would possibly make schools worldwide better (Monroe 2004). The studies on how students and teachers conduct themselves in the learning process are vital because the classroom contains the raw materials of learning; the teacher and students, the teaching learning resources, and the allocated time across the school year. (Senior, 2006).

Language is the medium through which the curriculum is delivered. (Johnson, (2009). Students engage in written communication in and outside school through computers, fax machines, the Internet and generally life today revolves around written texts such as text messages, emails, job applications, marriage certificates, wills, rules and regulations in institutions, the constitution and the penal code, (Munroe, 2004). For example, sale agreements are by practice put in writing while evaluation of learning from pre-school to university and even reports by Blue chip companies are done in writing. (Munroe, 2004). This implies the need to develop students' competence in writing in school especially through writing designated lessons.

The way writing is taught and the experiences given to the pupils in the classroom can either enhance or hinder children attitude and ability to write. In functional

writing classes combination of independent writing activities and group writing have been found to be beneficial to student, (Cohen & Cowen, (2007). Independent writing promotes self-belief and confidence. Group writing is where a number of students compose a functional text collaboratively with teacher support and guidance.

Another strategy that can be used in teaching writing is use of writing conferences which give students opportunities to ask questions and get feedback on their writing. The conferences can be roving conferences, peer conferences, group conferences, and whole class conferences. (Cohen & Cowen, (2007). Roving conferences occur at the start of the functional writing lesson where the teacher asks simple questions on the writing to be done to get student experiences on the writing so as to build on it and motivate them to write (Cohen& Cowen, (2007). Individual conferences occur at the end of any writing stage where the teacher asks individual students to read out their writing so that the teacher responds to and puts the child on track before moving to the next stage. Teachers may also use peer conference where a pair of children write together. On the other hand, group conference addresses a difficulty affecting a number of children while whole class conference provides a common ground for writing either at the beginning or the end of the writing process. (Cohen & Cowen, (2007).

Functional writing may also be taught using writing workshops, or guided practice using authentic materials that make the writing skills learnt appear relevant and immediate to the learner since the authentic materials resemble those used in the world of work. (Maroko 2011).

The use of the word processor to teach functional writing can make learning of functional writing easier because students can revise and edit their work and can move parts of the document from one section to another at the touch of the mouse, (Cohen & Cowen, (2007). Computers have been found to make writing a social process and enable students revise their work often making them write longer and more comprehensive essays, (Munroe, 2004).

Employing the correct classroom practices in writing and other areas of learning has been found to be beneficial. (Dukmark, 2010), opines that teacher student interaction is fundamental in learning since it involves students in the learning process allowing them to be willful participants. It has been found to make students more socially competent and improve their academic performance (Pianta, Stuhlman, & Hamre, 2002). For example, group discussion promotes high order thinking in that students become analytical about their existing knowledge, relate it to what they know and gain new insights into the concepts being studied. The higher the level of interaction, especially verbal, within the collaborative groups, the higher the achievement. (Gillies, Ashman & Terwel, 2008).

Studies on classroom practices across the globe reveal that teachers employ diverse practices. According to Salmien (2013), in western countries like Finland, teachers foster student classroom participation especially through group-work and conversation. The teachers were aware of the need for children to be actively involved in the class, thereby making learning not to be a solely teacher directed activity but a shared responsibility between teachers and their students. Research has established that students given opportunity to explain themselves in class learn more quickly. (Salmien, 2013).

In Africa, however, most teachers have been found to be using teacher centered practices. Tabulawa (1998) on secondary school Home Science teacher practices in Botswana, found teachers using teacher directed practices contrary to the Ministry of Education recommendations of learner based instructions. The teachers' practices were influenced by the teachers' assumptions about how teaching was supposed to be done and their perception of their students. Knowledge of suitable practices recommended by the government did not make them adopt those practices.

In Tanzania, Hardman (2008) established that primary school classrooms were characterized by teacher initiated and controlled talk, consisting mostly of teacher dominated explanations and questions. Therefore, pupil participation was limited to completion of phrases and chorus answers. These practices were termed as academically deficient, monotonous and failed to promote higher order thinking. (Gray, 2008) avers that the largest barrier to learner centered learning in most subjects is content. Teachers feel overwhelmed by a wide syllabus to be covered and think that students working with new content cover it very slowly on their own. This could be true in writing if teachers regard functional writing skills as unfamiliar to students. However, if teachers were to give learners the skills to handle functional writing tasks then learning of writing would be student led. According to Gray (2008), teachers have not created environments that make students responsible for their writing and the result is that students work for grades and not to acquire lifelong functional writing skills.

In Kenya, the situation is no different. Pontefract and Hardman (2005), in their research established that the poor quality of student learning witnessed in many

Kenyan schools correlated strongly with poor quality teaching. They concluded that although government efforts were directed at increasing the number of teachers, little is known on how to enhance classroom practices that would improve student achievement. This situation is more pronounced in language classrooms. Bunyi (2005) in her study on classroom practices in primary schools in Kenya blamed highly structured classroom talk, teacher-directed pupil interaction, choral responses for the poor learning of content. Studies conducted in secondary schools reveal that likewise, teachers use teacher-centered techniques and learner participation is teacher determined (Nyasimi 2014, Ogutu, 2012, Masika, 2011, Nyambura, 2010). Group work and peer teaching, though proven to promote writing, were rarely used (Nyasimi 2014). The researcher found that student participation in writing classes in the form of choosing assignments, partners to work with or even having a plenary session where written assignments are discussed were almost non-existent. The much students did was scribing, copying information from the text book or the blackboard (Magut, 2000). This situation is worrying because teachers ought to maximize the potential of student writing so as not only to pass examinations, but also demonstrate their competence in using functional writing outside school. (Abdalla 2014)

Functional writing, which is the writing for practical purposes or to meet real life requirement can make student learning of English more meaningful since they can see language at work (Abdallah, 2014). It enables the learner to convey ideas in a practical context emulating as much as possible real life situations. Therefore, it is important that learners be competent in functional use of writing so as to achieve communication competence important in life and the world of work (Onchera, 2013).

Poor writing is reportedly rampant leading to students facing problems at the university or in filling up job vacancies advertised by the industry. The Kenya National Examination Council in its reports, (2011, 2012, 2013) laments that students have serious weakness in writing while Barasa (2005) asserts that universities are concerned about first years' students spoken and written English. Bunyi (2008) also decries the poor written and spoken English skills among elementary, secondary and college learners attested by Newspaper articles and expresses dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning in Kenyan schools. This problem transcends the various spheres of the society. Azuakola reporting for the Daily Nation on 23rd March 2015 quoted the Chair of Kenya Magistrate Vetting Board as saying that many officers in the judiciary had below par writing skills and not up to the job. Only 5 persons out of 45 vetted had exemplary writing skills. This is a very serious situation that calls for research into how we got there. If judicial officers, judges included, have less than desirable functional skills what can we say about high school students? Whose responsibility is it to impart the skills if not the teachers'? And why such low levels of competence across the Kenyan society considering that teachers are in class teaching students how to write functional essays?

Githunguri Sub-county students have poor writing competence. According to the County Director of Education 2015 Internal Mock Result Analysis, 75% of students in the county consistently scored below 50% in the functional writing question. Examiners for the internal mocks and KCSE have decried students lack of mastery in simple tasks such as writing minutes or public notices. It was important to carry a study on teacher classroom practices in functional writing classes to see their

implications on student acquisition of functional writing skills. This is because functional Writing is a compulsory examination question in English Paper One and although it is marked out of 20 marks, failure to master the functional skills has implications in the world of work and everyday living. Research asserts that classroom practices impact learning directly, (Munroe, 2004). However, the subject of teacher practices in Githunguri schools specifically in writing classes has attracted little (or no) attention from researchers. The question is, do we know enough of what happens in classes where functional writing is taught? This is the gap that prompted this research study.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education English Curriculum expects learners to acquire competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The students are required to exhibit mastery in functional writing skills such as designing posters, filling forms, writing and making public notices, writing letters of complaint, taking minutes of a meeting, writing letters of Application for a vacancy, Memos, among many others which are related to the world of work.

However, it is evident that students are not learning functional writing skills because they exhibit poor competence in functional writing tasks. This is confirmed by KNEC in its various reports released annually. Consequently, this study was carried out to find out why secondary students in Githunguri Sub-county have insufficient mastery of functional writing. Is it because of teacher practices? This was the quest of this research.

1.3.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine and describe secondary school teachers of English classroom practices and the implications of those practices on the students' acquisition of functional writing skills in Githunguri sub-county.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study.

- i) To describe the various classroom practices employed by teachers in secondary school English functional writing lessons,
- ii) Describe the nature of classroom discourse in functional writing classrooms,
- iii) Identify challenges that teachers face in teaching functional writing

1.3.3 Research Questions

- i) What classroom instructional activities are teachers of English using in secondary school classes where functional writing is being taught?
- ii) What kind of verbal interactions characterize the functional writing classes?
- iii) What major hurdles impede teachers from effectively teaching functional writing?

1.4 Significance of the Study (Rationale)

Firstly, the study would be significant in promoting use of appropriate teacher classroom practices in the teaching and learning functional writing skills.

Secondly, the study would unpack challenges that teachers face in teaching functional writing. This would help teachers of English come up with ways to mitigate the challenges. Classroom practice is a fundamental part of curriculum implementation.

Lastly the study will fill a gap in literature on classroom practices employed by teachers in teaching functional writing classes in Kiambu County.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to teacher classroom practices evident in the functional writing classes. The researcher pre-arranged with the teachers to teach functional writing during the research. Knowing that they are under observation, the teachers could change their classroom activities. To mitigate this limitation, the teachers and their students were briefed by the researcher that this was an academic study and not supervision of their teaching. Also ten observations in a period of three months were made enabling teachers and students used to the presence of the researcher.

The sample size was significantly small since observing a large number of teachers individually is considerably non-beneficial in naturalistic research. However, many and intensive observations were carried out. The findings of the study may not be generalizable.

1.5.1 Delimitations of the Study

The proposed study was restricted to public secondary schools because functional writing is a compulsory in secondary school KCSE Paper 101/1 and is examined termly.

Secondly, the study targeted only teachers and students of English as opposed to Kiswahili and French which also teach functional writing. Lastly, the study was restricted to Githunguri sub-county due to time and financial constraints.

1.6 Assumptions

- i) Classroom practices affect student learning.
- ii) All teachers of English are trained to teach functional writing skills.
- iii) The teachers face certain challenges in teaching functional writing

1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

1.7.1 Theoretical Frame Work

The study was based on Constructivist theory of learning as stipulated by Vygotsky (1978) and Jerome Brunner (1966).

Constructivists posit that learning comes from social interactions through guided learning where children construct their own knowledge with the help of teachers or partners. Students are inquisitive and active participants in knowledge acquisition. Therefore, learning should occur through social interactions in the form of classrooms practices with a skillful teacher who models behavior expected as he instructs the child (McLeod, 2007). Vygotsky refers to the teacher as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), a person who has better competence or ability than the learner in executing a particular task or grasp of concept. In this study the teacher is the MKO in that he is trained to teach writing and is more knowledgeable than the learners.

The second aspect of constructivist learning is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which relates to how much a student can learn on their own in comparison to what the child can achieve with skilled guidance from a teacher or another child (Vygotsky, 1978). Proximal Development requires that teachers give inquiry mode

instructions so that the learner can develop skills that they can use on their own. In this case teachers will use practices that will develop functional skills in learners to be used for practical purposes.

Classrooms that employ constructivist teaching are characterized by low dependency on teachers, have high frequency of group-work and the focus shifts from the teacher to the student (Erdogan, 2008).

The theory was suitable for this study because the social interactions between teachers and student envisaged by constructivists are the classroom practices teachers should encourage in their functional writing Classes. The learner will become an active participant in the lesson and so will not learn functional writing as something to be memorized but as an important life-long skill. The role of the teacher will be interactive engagement of student via student centered activities such as group-work and thought provoking questions.

Therefore, the teacher must arrange the writing skills to be taught in a way that it is readily understood by his learners and not just depend on the text (Brunner, 1966). Constructivist theory will require the teacher to be innovative so as to facilitate acquisition of writing skills for practical purposes and not for exams.

1.7.2 Conceptual Framework

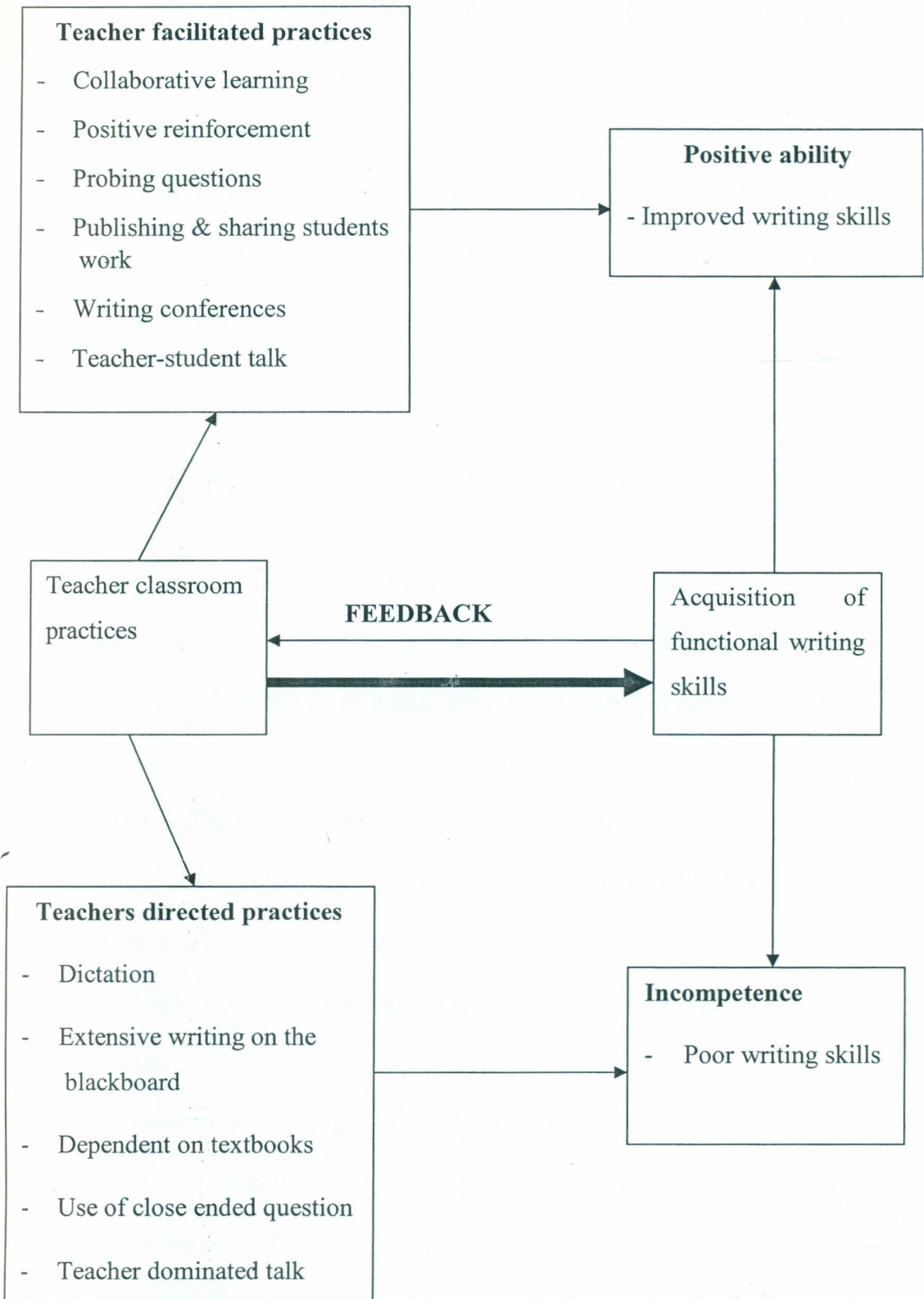


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

The independent variable is classroom practices or instructional classroom activities that teachers engage in while teaching functional writing. These activities can be teacher centered or student oriented. The student based practices include collaborative learning, teacher dialogue with students, asking high order questions which lead to competence in functional writing manifested in display of correct format and language in functional documents and improved written communication in and outside school.

The dependent variable is the students' competence in writing letters, designing wedding cards and others or exhibiting unsatisfactory mastery of the skills.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Classroom practices: What the teacher does while in the class which can be observed e.g. type of questions asked, time on academics, interaction with students etc.

Functional writing: writing meant to fulfill a practical purpose in the life of the learner, e.g., writing a letter of complaint to the Director of Education

Functional writing skills: Ability to communicate concisely and in the right format and tone using letters, instructions, memos, adverts and others, for realistic day to day activities.

Probing conferences: writing sessions before the actual writing begins where the teacher finds out what the student want to write about and whether the learners are stuck or making desired progress.

Talk: this is the verbal exchange or words said either by the teacher or students in the course of a classroom lesson.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Several previous studies have been carried out on teachers' classroom practices and their impact on student's achievement. This chapter will review literature related to the problem on teachers' classroom practices and their impact on students' achievement in acquiring the functional writing skills under the following sub-headings; the concept of writing, teacher classroom practices, nature of classroom talk, and challenges that teachers face in teaching functional writing. A chapter summary highlights key knowledge issues, controversies in literature, main research gaps and actual gaps the research will address.

2.2 The Concept of Writing

Writing is said to be useful in improving the academic progress of children by inculcating skills of self-expression and self-reliance which are very crucial in the success of young children and schooling adults alike (Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000). For example, summarizing information presented in a science book helps students understand the content better because the learner is able to analyze, personalize and manipulate major concepts in that text. Since writing is a communicative action, the learner gains more knowledge about writing when he creates his own texts (Shanahan, 2006).

Writing is characterized by systematically ordered signs which form writing systems such as the alphabetic common in most European languages English included, syllabic; common in most Far East countries like Japan, or logo graphic where

characters are related to the smallest units of meaning like in the Chinese language. (Mureithi, 2014). In whichever system, writing is chiefly an individual process where one makes permanent marks on a surface whose meaning can be interpreted without the writer being consulted. (Mureithi, 2014). Since what is written is then a record of sorts, it is vital that mastery of writing is sought.

Writing has been categorized in various ways. Maroko (2010) divides writing depending on the purpose it serves. Therefore, there is academic writing and writing for real life purposes. Academic writing is for award of certificates in schools, colleges and universities and cuts across disciplines and subjects in the curriculum while writing for real life purposes, termed as functional writing, provides learners with skills necessary for everyday use and work place assignments. The first category encompasses argumentative, expository, discursive and descriptive imaginative essays while the second category involves designing posters, writing things to do list, creating an advertisement, writing minutes of a meeting, and making a formal complaint among many other lives related documents. This division is similar to Kenya Institute of Education (KIE, 2002) English syllabus which has creative writing and functional writing categories.

Functional writing is important in that it prepares learners for everyday activities in and outside the school. (Abdalla 2014) According to Onchera (2013), functional writing equips learners with essential knowledge so that they can operate in life confidently, effectively and independently in schools and in their social relations since learners will be required to fill forms in various institutions. Such forms may include school admission Forms, Bank Opening Registration Forms and even Tax Return Forms.

Indeed, the importance of writing skills cannot be over-emphasized. The National Commission for Writing in USA (2010), found that young people without good writing skills were at a serious disadvantage when they wanted to pursue higher education or getting well-paying gainful employment because writing is the gateway to employment and subsequent promotion as candidates have to write letters of application or fill appraisal forms. As a result, employees with sharp writing skills stand out as their communication is very clear.

The Kenya National Examinations Council report (2011) has lamented about students' weaknesses in writing, therefore, student writing abilities should be harnessed at all costs.

2.3 Teacher Classroom Practices

What teachers do while in class is shallowly understood although students spend much of their time receiving instructions from teachers (Shaughnessy, 2010). In order to improve educational processes and understanding among students, teachers' beliefs, attitudes and practices are core factors. Teachers shape students' learning environment and at the same time motivate and influence learners' achievement. (Shaughnessy,2010)

Research conducted on the effects of school on student classroom achievements posits that although schools matter, the teaching effectiveness overshadows both student economic background and government educational spending per child per year (Wenglinsky, 2000; Stronge 2007). It is the teachers who interpret and implement the syllabus but teaching is more than just presenting and providing facts

and figures. Children need not only to learn the different subjects but also acquire relevant skill, attitudes and competence. Teachers need to provide meaningful learning experiences and offer necessary information for the goals of education to be realized (Wang & King, 2009).

Nevertheless, there is no consensus on what specific combination of classroom practices are best for student achievement. Wenglinsky (2000) for instance emphasizes individualization of learning where the teacher tailors his lesson in consideration of the student's experiences and background. This requires that the teacher should have extensive knowledge of the student's social and academic experiences which may not be possible in congested classrooms. He adds that student should be given authentic assessment which should be varied in form and structure. Both qualitative and quantitative research emphasizes collaborative or group learning in the classroom.

Shahamat & Mede (2013) in their study on collaborative learning in Turkish Elementary classroom found that group learning enhanced classroom interaction and student in learning of English in Fifth grade. Yet, studies on classroom discourse reveal that collaborative learning is sparingly used, Nyambura (2010) in her study on classroom practices in Mathematics in Nakuru concluded that although teachers employed diverse discourse, direct instructions was the dominant mode. Teacher talk and teacher initiated questions dictated student participation and involvement in the lessons.

Other classroom researchers working in African classrooms have likewise reported that majority of classes are autocratic characterized by choral responses and chanting intellectually uninspiring elicitations. These practices make the classrooms boring by denying students the benefits of group work involvement, and opportunity to express themselves. (Bunyi 2005; Bunyi 2008; Pontefract, 2002; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005). Individualistic teaching where pupils engage in the same task has been found to be the most dominant classroom practice. Alexander (1992), found that a third of the teachers taught over half the time while in front of the class. This is similar in South Africa where teacher emphasize rote learning and giving correct answers to questions rather than teachers encouraging students to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of the knowledge (Muthvhi, 2008).

Feedback has been identified as an important practice in addressing weaknesses in writing (Hounsel, 2008). For feedback to be meaningful, it should show the learner the mistake and the improvement to rectify the error. But research has found that most teachers give highly judgmental feedback sometimes too strongly worded which discourages young writers. Mogere (2008) in a study on Kiswahili Insha concluded that teachers either give a numerical mark which does not indicate the student's strengths or weaknesses in writing, or made many red underlining's which did not explain the error in the sentences or words underlined.

Teachers may not be able to mark students' compositions as frequently as is necessary because of high volumes of paperwork and high teaching loads but Frankland (2007) recommends peer marking because it helps students see the shortcomings in their as well as others writing.

Research on classroom practices avers that in writing classes, use of appropriate questions focuses the student's attention into the writing skill being learned by disrupting the students' thinking so that the student can focus his attention to the instructional objectives of the writing task (Alexander, 1992). Questions are therefore indispensable in the classroom. But the kind of questions asked determines learning objectives. Campbell & Erdogan (2008), posit that teachers should use fewer close ended questions and employ more open ended questions to encourage rapid and sustained cognitive development in line with constructivist learning.

However, Pontefract & Hardman (2005), in a study conducted in primary schools in Kenya found that questions asked had a predictable YES/NO pattern from the teacher's mid- sentence intonation which was a cue on the kind of response the teacher required. The questioning increased classroom participation but failed to deepen students' knowledge. (Muhammad & Hollie 2012).

The way instruction is delivered in the classroom is crucial component of learning. Explicit instruction or direct instruction has been recommended in teaching specific skills and knowledge especially where there is a small number of specified classroom goals (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Explicit instruction is effective if teachers break the learning task into small steps, organize learning resources beforehand to avoid time wastage and engage students in classroom activities by rapidly pacing the lesson and encouraging high order thinking, (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Besides this fact, good instruction on the other hand is regarded as responsive to students' needs, classroom setup and school background factors and mostly geared by teachers' perspective. (International Survey, 2009).

Nevertheless, literature is inconclusive on what classroom practices are best in writing classes. Some identify a positive classroom environment, effective classroom layout, giving student time to practice writing and developing positive relationship between teachers, students and their families. While some practices touch on actual teaching practices, others dwell on classroom setting (Himmele & Himmele, (2011).

2.4 The Nature of Classroom Talk

Human beings interpret talk in their everyday life as they work, play, and trade, relax or learn. For example, talk is used to persuade others to give us goods or sharpen our knowledge as we tell or explain things to others. This is more evident in the classroom where a lesson should be a verbal exchange by which the teacher elicits information from the students, and simplifies it so that learners synthesize the information for learning to occur (Edward & Westgate 1994).

How language has been used in the classroom to communicate between the teacher and the student on one hand and the student to student on the other is a subject of educational inquiry that has been studied for quite a while because it has been realized that classroom talk is not only a vehicle for sharing information in the class but a means through which we can develop understanding of classroom dynamics (Hodgkinson & Mercer 2012)

Barnes (1992) in “From Communication to Curriculum” in his study on classroom talk observed in Leeds secondary schools found that pupils did not benefit fully from talk in the classroom because the talk was highly rigid and formalized. He

concluded that the communication employed by the teacher in the classroom defined the roles played by the learners and subsequently determined the kind of learning that took place in the classroom.

The work of the effective teacher is therefore not just to deliver content but also manage the interactions in the class. This is because guided talk has been found to help pupils grasp new ideas faster and better (Hodgkinson & Mercer 2012)

Scott & Ametller (2007) in their study of use of talk in Science classrooms focused on how teacher-pupil interactions happen especially in whole class set -ups. Talk was found vital in helping pupils understand that ideas can be different from the way they appear and have a scientific explanation which is deeper and based on facts. They categorized talk taking place between and among students into interactive and non-interactive. Interactive talk has verbal participation of students while non - interactive involves mainly the teacher talk. Further, the communication may be dialogic (teacher wants to know what his/her students think) or authoritative in which case the teacher is less interested in pupils' prior knowledge and participation; focusing solely on content delivery.

Consequently, classroom talk can be viewed as falling into four sub categories namely (i)*interactive-dialogic*; characterized by teacher and students exploring a variety of ideas together; (ii)*non- interactive dialogic*; where the teacher reviews varied viewpoints of an idea;(iii)*interactive- authoritative*; where the teacher uses questions and answers to lead the student to a predetermined perspective with the objective of making the students adopt that point of view and (iv) *non -interactive*

authoritative where the teacher is the all-knowing in presenting information.(Mortimer & Scott 2003).

Classroom discourse is only effective if pupils are actively engaged in learning through exploratory talk, (Mortimer & Scott (2003). This is talk characterized by hesitation as students try to grasp an idea and contrasts with presentational talk which is rehearsed and present idea that has been comprehended by the teacher or the student (Hodgkinson & Mercer 2012). Alexander (2006) in his international research on talk in primary schools especially in English Classrooms decried the brief forms of unstained interactions between the teacher and the students. He found that teachers moved rapidly from one student to the next in an effort to maximize student participation. Most of the questions asked by teachers were on content while the students needed more questions on how things were done. In fact, most of the teacher's questions were closed intended at making students identify correct answers while wrong answers were never probed so that they could become the foundation for introducing new knowledge. In many cases teachers talk was a cue for students to recall but not to think or engage in speculative talk.

Walsh (2006) came up with four modes of talk based on what goal and features the classroom talk has, which is in most instances teacher determined. These modes are:(a) *managerial* concerned with classroom control for instance giving feedback (b) *materials mode* whose purpose is to focus learners' attention on learning resources being used, (c) *skills mode* in whose learning aim is to practice the skills learned and (d) *classroom context mode* in which the teacher allows learners to discuss their feelings, aspirations, hopes and even disposition.

On the other hand, Sinclair & Coulthard (1972) came up with a system to describe classroom talk which has an initiation, followed by a response from the learners and finally a feedback from the teacher. This sequence was found common in most African classrooms, (Pontefract & Hardman 2005).

The studies cited investigated classroom talk either in science classroom and language classrooms. There is a gap nature of talk in English functional writing classes.

2.5 Challenges that Teachers Face in Teaching Writing

Writing skills are necessary for any learner since we live in a world where a lot is expressed in print. Onchera, (2013) argues that it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that learners leave schools with the sufficient writing competence. However, teachers face challenges while teaching writing.

Nyangau (2015) on challenges students face in learning essay writing skills in English language in secondary schools in Manga Sub County found that the competence of students in language was unacceptably low. In addition, he felt that writing was allocated very little time and most schools had inadequate number of teaching learning resources such as text books and audio visual aids. Teachers also failed to seriously plan for the writing lessons Rohayati, (2014) in a study on challenges in teaching writing skills at junior high school in Pakistan asserted that though writing was a complex task that required a combination of grammar, vocabulary and comprehension, teachers had to contend with students who have diverse writing abilities giving teachers a hard time in plan lessons that would cater for the individual differences. Also, writing lessons require thorough preparation so

that many learning activities and resources are included to make the lessons interesting (Rohayati, 2014). Among other challenges found that teachers face includes dealing with students with a shallow vocabulary, grammar problems and poor motivation, (Phillipas & MacArthur 2015)

Research has established that teachers use traditional approaches to teach writing which may not match with today's technological world (Phillipas & MacArthur 2015). A wide syllabus also makes teachers rush through writing tasks because the time allocated to writing is little meaning that teachers have no time for the weaker students' guidance. (Phillipas & MacArthur 2015).

Another challenge in teaching writing touches on teacher professional training to teach writing. (Phillipas & MacArthur 2015) found that teacher training on writing was questionable because majority of teachers reported feeling not being adequately prepared to teach. Consequently, teachers avoided teaching writing.

Research has found that it's not only teachers that face challenges in writing but students have their own shortcomings, (Coker & Ritchey, 2015). Students view writing as a difficult endeavor which is compounded by the fact that students have little time to plan for their writing and their exposure to writing could be minimal leading to limited vocabulary and low confidence in executing writing tasks, (Schumm 2006). In addition, learners with extremely poor hand writing faced a bigger challenge.

Lastly, the attitude of students is vital if they are to become competent writers. (Coker & Ritchey, 2015) found that students term writing as uninteresting and engage with it unwillingly. Students are required to coordinate many mental processes while writing making them feel inadequately prepared and frustrated. Also students know that writing exposes them to the teachers and their fellow students' scrutiny and since they are afraid of making their writing failures public, they detest writing (Coker & Ritchey, 2015). Writing as a process requires determination and persistence in the students so that they don't stop at the point of correction by the teacher but work to improve always. (Schumm 2006).

The literature cited touches on challenges of writing in general. There is a gap on challenges facing teachers in teaching functional writing.

2.6 Summary of Reviewed Literature

From the reviewed literature the following summary can be made. Firstly, research has shown that what teachers do in class is a crucial component of student achievement greatly outweighing school and home factors. Secondly, classroom research has identified practices that are positively related to student achievement. Some practices are related to quantity and pacing of instruction while others are related to quality of teachers and the structure of the lesson. Thirdly, research demonstrates that classroom talk is an indispensable component of teaching and learning and that teachers face challenges in teaching writing.

However, literature is a controversial on what combination of practices is suitable for students' learning, it's not clear for example whether student- centered learning

practices would be effective in cultures where students expect teachers to control learning as they are the adults. Much of the literature on classroom practices is on Mathematics and Science and Language classrooms in primary schools. Though there is much literature on writing instruction, there seems to be little description of practices in English functional writing classes in Kenya secondary school.

Also, there is little literature on classroom talk in Secondary school functional writing classes and challenges that teachers face in teaching functional writing secondary schools in Githunguri Sub County. These are the gaps that this study sought to fill.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents research design, variables, research methodology, location of the study, target population, sampling techniques and sample size; research instruments, piloting of research instruments, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis. It also presents logical and ethical consideration.

3.2 Research Design

The study used naturalistic inquiry common in descriptive ethnographic research because according to Phillips & Hardy, (2002) a naturalistic research is suitable for describing educational interrelationships that cannot be manipulated. The study intended to present an in-depth picture of functional writing classes through intensive observation, interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. The design was chosen because naturalistic research is suitable for a study aimed at describing the practices of students and teachers in the classroom set up. (Merriam, 2001).

3.2.1 Variables

The independent variable is teacher classroom practices or the instructional activities in the English functional writing classes while the dependent variable is student acquisition of functional writing skills both for examinations and functional competence in day-to-day life.

3.2.2 Research Methodology

The research was qualitative because according to Mugenda (2013) qualitative methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of what people do and the reasons for their actions. Classroom observation is concerned with unraveling reasons for teachers and students' practices in the class but more importantly describing the discourse for the purpose of making it available for analysis so as to shed light on its influence on the acquisition of functional writing skills; the main drive of this research.

3.3 Location of the Study

The location of the study was Githunguri sub-county in Kiambu County. Githunguri is situated in the former Central Province and is in the wider Metropolitan zone of the capital city Nairobi. The major economic activity is dairy farming, and coffee farming which is on a decline. Githunguri is about 50 kilometers south and about an hours' drive from Nairobi. The locale was chosen because while marking internal county mocks for Githunguri sub county, the examiners and county educational officials repeatedly observed that 75% of candidates wrote completely irrelevant documents or used the wrong formats evidence that problem of functional writing is persistent in schools there.

Secondly the researcher has taught English in the county for twenty (20) years, marks the functional writing paper at the internal county mocks, and KCSE and is aware of the poor writing competence exhibited by students in functional writing tasks and is interested in finding out why.

3.4 Target Population

The target population was the forty (40) public secondary schools, 11562 students and ninety (90) teachers of English in Githunguri sub- County. Government schools were chosen because functional writing is a compulsory section of the English paper 101/1 at KCSE. Public schools are more easily accessible for research and have a high retention of teachers than private schools which have a high turnover of teachers due to security of tenure.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Procedure

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

Fifteen schools were selected by simple random sampling by the writing the names of all public secondary school in the sub-county county, folding the papers, putting them in a black polythene paper, vigorously shaking the bag and drawing fifteen, one at a time. This is because functional writing is a compulsory area of the English Language Curriculum in the country and so all schools had students learning functional writing. Out of the fifteen, five schools were randomly selected for observation to document varied classroom experiences. One teacher (per the 5 schools), teaching Form 1 and /or Form 3, was purposively selected for lesson observation. Simple lottery was used to select only one of the form 1 and form 3 streams for observation. To respond to the student questionnaire, one stream of the form two classes was selected by simple lottery (Yes/No) folded paper. (This happened in all the 15 schools). Then, 10 form two students from the sampled stream and 5 from the classes observed were randomly selected to fill up the questionnaire by picking a folded paper written “Yes”. To be interviewed, 2 teachers of English per school were sampled randomly making a total of 30 teachers. Form

four students were exempted because much of the functional writing studied at their level is revision.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The sample size for this study included a total of fifteen schools and 30 teachers of English. A total of 200 students sampled responded to the questionnaire. According to Freedman (2003), qualitative studies use smaller samples which are easily manageable. This study was highly observational and descriptive and since the five teachers were observed for 50 lessons and the lesson recorded, the sample size was low for manageability, (Murchison 2013).

3.6 Research Instruments

The study used a classroom observation schedule, semi-structured interview schedule and a student questionnaire. Multiple research instruments were used to get a comprehensive picture of the classroom situation in the functional writing class teaching and reduce research bias.

3.6.1 Observation Schedule

The observed lessons were pre-arranged by requesting the teachers to teach functional writing in the lessons to be observed. The limitation is that teachers may change their normal teaching strategies. To minimize this, 10 observations were carried out in three months for each teacher and indeed there were 3 preliminary observation lessons that were not recorded where the researcher just sat in class and observed the flow of the lesson to get the teacher used to the researcher's presence. The lesson observation schedule attempted to accurately describe

teaching-learning activities, the classroom interactions and linguistic exchanges. To get a complete picture of the classroom proceedings, the lessons were recorded using two smart phones one placed on the teacher's desk while the other was placed on the researcher's desk placed at the center back of the class to capture the nature of classroom talk and interaction and to reinforce review what was observed. The observation schedule collected direct information on classroom context such as the number of pupils, whether the learning activities are individualistic or group work, generally what activities the teacher and the students engaged in the course of the lesson.

3.6.2 Semi -Structured Interview Schedule.

Semi-structured interviews before the lesson was carried out to capture information on teacher's experience in years of teaching, how much time they allocate to functional writing, their use of classroom talk and challenges they experience in teaching of functional writing. A post observation interview was conducted to help confirm or explain inferences derived from the lesson observation. Interview is a strong tool to provide in-depth insight into classroom practices the teachers employ in teaching not accessible through observation. The 30 teachers not observed were interviewed mainly on challenges they face in teaching functional writing.

3.6.3 Questionnaire

The student questionnaire consisted mainly of open ended questions. The questions were on what student felt was going on well or not in the functional writing classes. In addition, the students were asked to enumerate what they were dissatisfied with in teaching of functional writing, what they would like to see happen in the writing

class, how frequently group work is employed, who talks most in the class and any weakness areas in the functional writing. The questionnaire was administered to 200 students (150 Form two students, 10 from each of the 15 schools sampled) and 10 students from each of the 5 schools observed responded to the questionnaire. Only Form one and Form three streams were observed.

3.6.4 Document Analysis

Ten (10) Student exercise books were collected randomly five(5) from Form 1 and five(5) from Form Three students from each school making a total of fifty books. They were used to check the frequency of functional writing tasks executed and also observe how it was marked and the forms of feedback given to students.

3.7 Pre-testing/Piloting Study

Piloting was carried in two public schools in Kiambu County that were excluded from the actual study. Two teachers from each school were interviewed and observed twice teaching and the lesson was tape recorded. The students were nervous about the tape recording (It became clear that many have not interacted with tape recorders) and therefore a smart phone recording was preferred since it was less intrusive and majority of students have used smart phones to record their voices and take Selfies. Questions found ambiguous were rephrased while unnecessary ones were omitted. Piloting helped establish the duration required to answer the questions and conduct interviews with the teachers and where best to place the smart phones for recording.

3.7.1 Validity

Validity is finding out if items in the research tools measure what they were supposed to measure (Creswel, 2009). The instruments were scrutinized by the supervisors from the department for content validity. (Neumann, (2007). The instruments were analyzed by the supervisors for content validity and ascertained to gather information suited to the research objectives

3.7.2 Reliability

According to Groth-Marnat, (2009), the degree of obtaining similar results over a number of repeated trials using a particular method of collecting data is known as reliability. Reliability of the interview schedule was determined split half method where two groups of teachers teaching Form One and Three were interviewed in the same week. The responses were compared and found to obtain similar results. The reliability of the questionnaire was through test-retest technique. Two groups of students were given the questionnaire twice in the piloting at one-week interval. The results were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient. A value of 0.83 was obtained. Such a value is indicative of reliability.

The reliability of the observation schedule was obtained by repeatedly using the schedule in piloting to check whether there were similar areas of observation in different lessons.

3.8 Data Collection Techniques/Process

The study obtained relevant authorization from Kenyatta University Graduate School, The National Commission for Science and Innovation (NACOSTI), the Kiambu County Commissioner and County Director of Education.

I visited the sampled schools, met the principals and explained the essence of the study, requesting permission to be interacting with teachers and students during the data collection period. I gave the principals the letters of authorization from the relevant authorities. The principals introduced the staff to me and more specifically the teachers of English. I talked to the teachers about the purpose of the study and the need to sit in class to make observations and record the class proceedings. The teachers were initially apprehensive about a stranger sitting through their classes. I explained that the study was not evaluative of their teaching and that the observation would be as unobtrusive as possible.

The teachers then introduced me to the students who I briefed the on the study. After identifying teachers handling Form One and three classes and settling on who would be observed, dates for commencement of observations were agreed upon. I arrived in the school before the lessons to be observed began. Sometimes I would be in the staffroom over breaks and mealtimes and I would engage in the staffroom talk. These interactions over time made the teachers relax and the observation easier. Often, I stayed in the schools for long periods if one lesson was observed in the morning and the next observation was in the afternoon. During these periods I would interview the teachers and analyze the students' functional writing exercise books. Occasionally, I would help the teachers in marking the functional essays giving more insight into the study.

Classroom Observation

A stranger in a classroom may be discomfoting to students. To overcome this shortcoming, I had to familiarize myself with the students through 3 introductory

lessons for the classes to be observed. I sat quietly at the back without taking notes and not recording. After the lesson, the teacher allowed me to chat with the students about my research. These sessions thawed any suspicions and unease in the students. Subsequent observations gradually became relatively tension free on the presence of the researcher. I had observational schedule and a field notebook. I noted how the lessons began and proceeded, what questions were asked, how students bid for nominations, who initiated classroom talk and all the interactions in the functional writing lesson. It was impossible to write down all happenings and observe at the same time. Brief notes were made in the course of the lesson. A comprehensive write up would be done in the evening, and with the help of the observation guide and mental notes, a recollection of lesson would be done

Each of the five teachers from different schools was observed and recorded teaching functional writing in ten (10) lessons making up a total of 50 observations and recordings in form 1 and Form 3 classes. The observation was passive as the researcher did not actively participate in the lessons. With the assistance of the teachers of English, I briefed the Form Two students on the study, and randomly selected 10 students who filled the questionnaires in a separate room.

Interviews were carried out before the observation so that the self-reporting of teachers on their practices could be compared with the observation. Post observation interview was also carried out to clarify observations. However not every observation was preceded by interview.

Recording Data

The classroom interactions and talk was captured through Smart phone recording. The modern day student is familiar with voice and video recording components of the Smart phone. When asked for permission to have their classroom talk recorded, majority of students said they did not mind as they had taken selfies with the teachers and voice recording was not new to them. There was assurance by the teacher and the researcher that the recordings would be used for research purposes and remain confidential. This made the students readily accept the Smartphone recordings to take place.

Every lesson observed was recorded with two phones, one at the teacher's desk, and the other at the center of the class for clarity recording.

3.9 Data Analysis

Systematic reading of field notes and categorization of data into areas of similarities and differences was done. Recurrent activities were mapped out and information congruent with the objectives selected leaving out information seeming unrelated to the study.

Narratives giving details of the classroom activities were presented. The description was followed by interpretation of the similarities and differences to paint a picture of the functional writing classes.

Content analysis where identifying and labeling of data for the sake of classification to ensure that the data collected highlights the classroom happening was undertaken.

Recorded data was transcribed and patterns in classroom interactions reviewed to reveal for instance, who speaks in the class and to whom? What is said and who bids for chances to participate in the class?

A description of classroom activities observed was presented. Any numerical data generated was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and graphs.

3.10 Logistical and Ethical Consideration

Letter of approval and clearance to collect data was obtained from Kenyatta University Graduate School; Department of Management Policy and Curriculum Studies in The School of Education. Through the clearance letter, a research authorization permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation and presented to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education who gave clearance to collect data through the Sub-county Director and Principals of the schools under study.

Appointments with teachers and principals of schools involved in piloting and the study were sought and intentions of the study outlined. Letters from the relevant authorities were presented and dates of administering research instruments fixed. Teachers were requested to voluntarily participate in the research and assured of confidentiality of data collected. Pseudonyms for schools and teachers were used for anonymity.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings of the study. The purpose of the study was to describe teacher classroom practices and students acquisition of functional writing skills. The findings were discussed and presented based on the research objectives which were as follows:

- i) To describe the different classroom practices used in secondary school English functional writing lessons,
- ii) Identify and describe the nature of classroom talk (interaction) in functional writing lessons,
- iii) Identify challenges that teachers face in teaching functional writing.

4.2 Demographic Information

The table below presents the demographic information of teacher respondents:

Table 4.1: Demographic information of teacher respondents

Variable N=30	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	22	73
	Male	8	27
	Below 5years	2	6.6
Teaching experience	5-10 years	12	40
	11-15years	10	33.3
	Over 15 years	6	20
Academic qualification	Dip Ed.	2	6.6
	B.Ed	22	73.3
	M.Ed	6	20

The table 4.1 indicates that there were more female teacher's respondents (73%) than males (27%). On teaching experience, only below a quarter (6.6%) had less than 5 years, while over a third (40%) had between 5-10 years. More than over a half (53.3%) had 11 years and over. Only about less 10% have Diploma in Education while almost three quarter (73.3%) of the respondents had Bachelor of Education. (B.Ed). The teachers' qualification and experience in teaching functional writing was felt to be adequate.

Table 4.2: Demographic information on student respondents

Class	Frequency	percentage
Form 2	145	96
Form 1	24	80
Form 3	18	90

Form two students were issued with more questionnaires because they were not observed and so their response is highest. The return of the questionnaires was impressively above 80%.

4.3 Teacher Classroom Practices

The first objective of the study was to describe the major classroom practices in functional writing classes. A general picture of what was observed in the classrooms is first presented followed by a selected lesson account for each of the five teachers observed. A teacher basically teaches almost the same way in different lessons. Therefore, any lesson selected will suffice to show the predominant classroom practices employed by the particular teacher.

4.3.1 General Classroom Practices in the Functional Writing Classes

This is a general summary of what was observed across the lessons. The teachers had updated schemes of work as recommended by the TSC. However, there was little coordination between what teachers taught and what was in the schemes. Teachers taught what they wished. Only 2 teachers had lesson plans and this happened at the first 2 lessons at of the observation. The lesson plans were said to be time consuming in preparation.

All teachers observed carried notebooks to the class from which they referred regularly and occasionally the course book. In 5 instances, the teachers carried revision textbooks specializing in only functional writing. Though it's the Ministry of Education policy that writing be integrated and be taught from reading and comprehension as well as form extensive reading materials such as magazines, journals on contemporary matters, none of the teachers observed used integration approach. In fact, all the 50 functional writing tackled just writing isolated from reading as recommended in the syllabus.

The lessons are by policy supposed to be 40 Minutes but the observed lessons were considerably shorter, about 35 minutes on average, owing to change over time, the formalities of greetings, time taken by students to settle down and draw out their books. These formalities took about 5 minutes. 3 teachers greeted the students all the time while 2 teachers were sporadic in the greetings. In 40 observations, the teachers taught standing in front of the class. In the 5 observations, students conducted the lesson in groups while in 5, the teachers slowly walked round the class checking students work while explaining what had been discussed at the beginning of the le

students were seated in rows and columns. This sitting arrangement is suitable for teacher controlled or centered teaching and since students can't maintain eye contact with each other (as they are seated side by side) there was little student to student interaction.

In 30 observations teachers would clean the blackboard and write the topic while in 20 observations, the blackboard was already clean, saving on lesson time. In 43 observations, teachers asked students what they understood with the terms in the topic. In 5 observations, teachers defined or explained the topic with little regard to what students knew about the functional writing being taught. Only in 2 observations were student's explanation adopted without the teacher's elaboration. In all the observations teachers elaborated greatly what area in the world outside school the functional skill is applicable in. In 46 observations, teachers covered the format/structure of the skill to be learnt first. They would write an example of the functional writing on the board for students to copy. Only in 2 instances did the teacher dictate the format to the students to copy. How the language and tone of the writing should be like were given in note form. Again the students would take notes. Four teachers always ended the lesson by asking 'Do you understand, or is it clear. 1 teacher always asked, "Are we together "or any question?"' Notably, these are YES/NO questions. In 38 observations, individual assignments were given while in the other 12 group assignments were given.

Only one teacher let the students conduct the lessons. In fact in 6 out of 10 observations, a group of 4 students presented researched work at the front with the teacher being a facilitator. These lessons had a high student classroom participation.

In the other 4 lessons the learning shifted from teacher to student and back as the lesson progressed.

4.3.2 Selected Classroom Observation for Individual Teachers

Mercy Magdalene (pseudonym) has a Bachelor's degree in education, a Master degree in Counseling Psychology and has taught English for 20 years. She teaches in an extra-county Girls Boarding school. Her class had 53 students and she taught English form one to form four. I observed her 7 times teaching form 1 and 3 times teaching form 3. A total of 10 observations

The lesson Description

Topic; Letters of Application, Form 3

She entered the class and after greetings wrote the topic on the board. *Official letters*, then as a sub-topic, *Letter of Application* she asked students what they understood by the term. eg “What do we mean by official letters?” The girls raised up their hands and she selected one student to answer. The teacher wrote the attempts on the board, and then with the class discussed the correctness of each student's response. She asked students to give examples of business letters then listed the sub categories of such as letters on the board, Example, letters of complaint, invitation, and apology and meticulously wrote details of each on the board. After discussing with the students, they copied what the teacher had written on the board in their exercise. At regular intervals she asked, “Do you understand?” to which the students responded in a chorus response, “Yes” Mercy then explained that letters of Application are those written to ask for a job, or admission to an institution. Mercy asked the students to give the requirements of official letters and heading, inside address, salutation and valediction were correctly identified.

Mercy asked the students to open Integrated English page 119 where the letters of Application was covered. She then asked a girl at a time to read each of the points on the how of writing the letter. Mercy would briefly explain the point.

The letter in the book was read and specifics of each paragraph written on the blackboard. The girls asked questions on the specifics of each paragraph. Example: "If I have worked in another company, where do I write that in the letter?" Mercy explained that should be in the second last paragraph. She ended her lesson by asking students to write a functional essay from the questions in the textbook. Mercy rarely encouraged student to student interaction either in form of pair or group work. However, Mercy engaged student by question and answer method and the girls were quite at ease and eager to ask questions on areas they did not understand. Mercy neatly wrote summarized notes on the Letters of Application on the blackboard and required her students to copy in their exercise.

Post observation interview.

Mercy felt her lessons went on fine because the students were orderly and asked for clarification where they did not understand. She also felt that the lesson objectives were met as students had seen an example in the textbook and she had explained comprehensively the various paragraphs of the letter.

Asked why she did not engage the students in group work or pair work, Mercy said groups wasted class time making it difficult to complete the syllabus while pair work generated noise with very shallow responses.

The observations in the later lessons revealed the same teaching pattern, Mercy wrote the functional writing on the board, explained to students who copied the example, asked for clarifications and did an assignment on the same from the course book or a question the teacher formulated. The lessons consisted largely of teacher questions, student answers and teacher explanations and lastly some assignments.

Students exercise books

Mercy students' exercise books were very neatly covered with almost half of assignments marked. There was a numerical mark out of 20 with scanty explanations on mistakes noted. Underlining in red and remarks such as "Good" or "Well Done" were observed. There were no remarks that would help the students write better when revising.

Mr. Yeboah's lessons

Mr. Yeboah is a graduate of Nairobi University and has taught English for 8 years. He teaches in a mixed sex day school. His form 3 class observed had 41 students, 19 girls and 21 boys was observed teaching form 1 class on 6 occasions and form 3 class on 4 occasions. He started his lessons by greeting the class then silently cleaning the blackboard. He would then remind students of the functional writing skill previously learnt and commence on the lesson of the day. In this lesson he was teaching the topic *Agenda and Notification of meeting* in a Form 3 class.

After writing the topic on the board, Mr. Yeboah asked students what clubs they belonged to. There were chorus answers such as YCS, C.U, Debate, Kiswahili among others. He asked if the clubs held meetings and how such information was conveyed

to members. The students individually answered that such information was relayed through announcements by the secretary during club meetings. Another student said the meetings were announced at the assembly by the patrons, while another said the information was posted on the notice board. The teacher then asked whether the students knew beforehand what was to be discussed in the meeting and the answer was a thunderous 'NO.' and that it was discovered in the meeting.

The teacher defined what agenda is and wrote on the blackboard examples of agenda for a student meeting. He wrote the following Agenda-Elections, school trip, discipline, accommodation, food and catering, sports and entertainment and welfare. He then wrote the format for writing Agenda and Notification for the students to copy. He wrote a notification of a meeting on the board with substantive Agenda well numbered. He then explained the necessary components and the language of the notification and agenda. "*We should be formal language and the agenda should be listed and numbered*". He would ask, whether the students understood. There would be weak affirmative answers as the students spent much time copying. He went round the class as students copied the example. Later he asked students to discuss in pairs the example on Excelling in English Book 3 and mirror English.

There were no guidelines on what was to be discussed. Consequently, students talked by pointing to the example in the book. They discussed in low tones with no plenary on the outcomes of the discussion from the teacher. Mr Yeboah went round the class and seemed to answer rare concerns raised by his students. Finally, Mr Yeboah gave the class an assignment to design a notification for scouts meeting to be held on 16th July 2017. The students were to list realistic substantive agenda. The

teacher defined explained and described. Although the prewriting was interesting the lesson proceeded in a one sided manner.

Post-observation interview.

Mr Yeboah felt that the lesson was successful and the objectives were met. When I asked Mr Yeboah why he wrote the example on the board before letting students see the one in the textbook, he said, “These students need to get the structure right. They do not read on their own considering it is a day school. Most are Lazy”. On why he did not get real examples of notifications of meetings from the staffroom, newspapers or cooperative societies the example for the students to see, Mr Yaboah said, “There is no time for photocopy and the school only photocopies examinations and not newspaper articles. The secretary would not take kindly to photocopy the notification for staff meetings as she considers them private and confidential and anyway these students would lose the copies before the end of the term”

Learners writing books.

The books had big red ticks across the pages where functional writing had been executed. Some had a mark out of 20 while others had grading such A to D with A the best and D the lowest. There were no comments on what was right or wrong on the functional writing marked.

Ms. Christabel’s lessons.

Christabel; A B.Ed graduate with 7 years teaching experience. Christabel teaches English in a girl’s boarding school. Her class had 55 students. She was observed 6 occasions teaching form 1 and 2 times teaching form 3 which she said was studying Literature set books.

Topic; Inventories, form 1

Her lessons followed the same pattern. After the formalities, she asked students how many books, they have. There were many chorus answers but she went ahead to ask the girls to list down their personal items. She wrote example of what she wanted” “List the number of items of clothing that you have such as Skirts and how many, shoes and how many, blouses. The students enthusiastically wrote in their exercise books. Meanwhile, Christabel drew columns with the following subheadings-item, number, date bought, condition. She then summoned students who raised their hands to the blackboard to fill the columns. There was laughter when a student said she had two skirts whereas she was supposed to list all her skirts in school and home. The lesson turned more hilarious when students were required to fill the date bought column as some brazenly wrote-“bought by mother” while others wrote “Can’t remember”. Once the list was done, the teacher wrote the word; INVENTORY above the table. She then explained what a simple inventory is. She then dictated the definition, importance and then drew an inventory with appropriate columns. The students, borrowing from the initial table on personal possessions, helped the teacher fill up the inventory. The students asked questions. Example, who signs the inventory, is it the librarian or the student being issued with books?”. The teacher explained in details the different inventories and finally asked students to see further examples from Integrated English Book 1. The teacher carefully took the student through the inventory in the course book. Christabel explained slowly every column drawing from the example and offering other real life instances such as the inventory on laboratory equipment in the school. She also highlighted the importance of having inventories in institutions

Post observation interview

Me: What made your students so excited and participate in the lesson fully?

C: I have made my students my friends and I love to simplify what they learn.

Me; Can you explain?

C: I begin with what they know before the unknown. I let them talk and noise is part of my class. They ask all sorts of questions...

When I asked Christine why she did not use a real Inventory to teach, she said it would be difficult to get one. This assertion was despite the fact that she constantly referred to the inventory in the library.

Mr. MUTUA; TOPIC, Journals.

Class: Form 1.

Mr Mutua taught in a boy's boarding school. He is a seasoned teacher with over 15 years teaching experience. He told me that he gives the students research questions on the functional writing to be taught two days before the actual lesson. This gives the students a head start as they become familiar with the writing which eases understanding. Depending on the complexity of the topic, he would either teach or ask a group to present in class. The lesson below was student-led.

When we entered the class we found three students conducting the lesson. I quietly sat at my desk while Mutua stood at the farthest corner from the door and hawk-eyed listened to the presentation. One student wrote on the blackboard what the other two presenters explained to the class. "Does a journal have a heading?" This question asked by a student brought animated arguments with some saying it has while others objected. Mr. Mutua let them argue then asked the students to support

their claims. All quoted varying textbooks but Mr. Mutua clarified that it was a personal choice since journal were personal in nature. He did not interrupt the student argument until he felt the divisions needed to be bridged.

The students presented a real but comic journal entry on a pronunciation goof by the prefect on duty that had taken place at the assembly on that day. Fortunately, I had attended the assembly as the lesson to be observed was the first. Again, Mr Mutua let the students have their way as long as the lesson was understood'

He finally summarized that the journal should not only describe but give a reflection. After the students who had presented sat down, Mr.Mutua praised their lesson. "Let's clap for group 5. They did very well ...Our next topic will be Memoranda. Who will present?"

There were many hands up and a group was elected by the teacher to present as other groups were asked to write their notes with possible questions for the group to present.

Post observation interview

I asked Mr. Mutua how he made the boys love functional writing that much. He said, "I let the student read, discuss, make notes and present. This way, the learning is in their hands" He added that he used group work for every class except in teaching some complex areas of grammar.

Commentary on the classroom observation.

The majority of lessons observed (47/50 or94%)were teacher directed with teachers writing on the blackboard and students copying what the teachers write. This implies

that students use very minimal time in actual writing of functional skills. Literature recommends that students, need ample time if they are to brainstorm, discuss, plan, compose, proofread and present their work in a plenary to share their writing, (Hunzer 2012). In fact, the teachers' use of question and answer only elicited recall responses with very minimal higher order questions that would provoke deeper learning of functional writing. These classroom practices have been found to be detrimental to learning leading to memorization of knowledge for reproduction during examinations (Pontefract 2002).

Writing was taught as an isolated activity with very little reading to complement the writing. Yet literature recommends that students should read extensively both fictional and non-fictional texts and their writing should be drawn from their reading (Muhammad & Hollie 2012).

Moreover, it was observed that teachers chose the topics to be taught and students had no prior information (apart from Mr. Mutua's classes presented above) on what functional writing was to be taught in the present or upcoming lessons. Though the teachers said they were following the syllabus, the learners were denied any option of choosing the topic to write on in such teacher directed lessons.

Discussion in pairs or even group was minimal in the lessons observed. The students listened to a presentation by the teacher most of the time though there were few lessons presented entirely by the learners. However, literature posits that although teachers need to present students with the examples of good writing, this can be achieved by students reading each other's work, writing in pairs and complementing

each other's strengths through collaborative class work, Group work has been found to create a relaxed environment for enjoyable writing, (Hunzer 2012).

There were no opportunities for students to share their writing since the teachers seemed interested in the final product and not the process of coming up with the finished product. Publishing or even printing of student's work was never observed as a classroom practice. This is despite literature recommending that teachers as the knowledgeable other (Vygotsky 1978) needs to be the helpful partner along the students writing journey.

Additionally, Hunzer (2012) recommends whole class discussion on functional writing be held, then small groups to prepare for plenary presentation and only after should students be asked to engage in individual writing. None of these practices was observed to be consistent in any of the lessons.

Data from student questionnaires

The students who responded to the questionnaires expressed concern over the way functional writing was taught. 165/200(83%) said there was no much writing during class time and they viewed functional writing chiefly as homework burden. 120/200(60%) of the students felt that teachers rushed through the functional writing in an effort to cover the syllabus, with little regard to the fact that most functional writing is new to students.

150/200(75%) of the students said they would wish to see teachers bring real examples of Minutes, adverts and sample emails among others to make functional writing more meaningful.

95% of students wished teachers would incorporate group work and involve students more actively in the functional writing.

Research indicates a positive correlation between collaborative learning and writing. Teaching and presenting writing through dramatizing, role play and plenary reporting were found to motivate peer correction hence improving student's ability in functional writing. (Baines 2008, Hunzer 2012).

However, the teacher and student practices recommended above were not frequently employed in functional writing classes observed.

4.4 Nature of Classroom Talk in Functional Writing Classes

The second objective of this study was to describe the nature of classroom talk in the functional writing classes. Talk includes the verbal exchanges between the teacher and the students or among students. Talk will encompass the communicative exchanges in the class. Talk is the chief medium of teaching and learning in the classroom. The study endeavored to find out who initiates classroom conversation, who speaks to whom, who listens, what is said, how is turn taking ensured, what responses are given to the initiation and whether there is feedback in the talk. Talk was recorded, transcribed and reviewed for patterns.

4.4.1 Description of Talk as Observed in the Classrooms

The students sat in regular rows facing the blackboard and the teacher standing in front. The teacher initiated talk from the greetings. Greetings were used by teachers as a formality and even when teachers asked students how they were doing; the teacher did not care about the actual welfare of the class. In one class, majority of

students seemed to have contracted a flue as they constantly coughed and blew their noses. Nevertheless, the teacher conducted the lesson normally. As soon as the teacher entered, the class would be silent waiting for the teacher to say what topic was to be studied. The teachers would explain in details the structure, language and tone of the functional writing being taught. When teachers asked questions, the students would bid for nomination by lifting their hands up and any unsolicited contribution was ignored. Chorus answers in the class were common especially to the question; **Do you understand or any question?**

The transcript below demonstrates the discourse that teachers used to nominate students and the manner of talk students use while answering questions

Transcript 1; form 1; topic, letter writing

T: Last week we learnt about informal letters. Who can remind us what we learnt

S1: ...also called friendly letters.... Er...are about ...relatives

T: Relatives...?

S1: (Many hands up) I mea.... n...friends...

T: (Appoints another student whose hand is up) Yes, Nicoleta

S2: They are mmm... letters on un...official ...matters.

T: Yes, we said they are letters to friends, relatives as opposed to official or business letters. What should the letters have, what is the structure...format...Yes?

S3 : (Hand up) My address...and date...a...n... d post code...yes...

Class: (laughter)...My address....my...address

T: (joins the laughter) ...Yes...my address...or the writers address...date...and post...

Class: Post code...

Teacher: What else...

From the transcript above it is clear that talk is between the teacher and the student with no talk among the students. Also teacher questions are evident with no student question. The teacher rapidly asks questions that seem to build on the subsequent ones thereby achieving classroom participation.

As for the student answers, they are given in hesitant exploratory manner since the Student tries to give responses approximate as possible. According to Cadzen (2007), effective teaching should exploit the exploratory answers to probe students' comprehension and develop further understanding. Spontaneous classroom participation or talk may occur due to amusing incidences or teacher's cued incomplete answers requiring students' completion.

Talk although enhancing classroom participation seems skewed to the teachers favour. The power structure is established through talk as only students whose hand was up is elected to answer a teachers question or ask the teacher a question. As deducible from the transcript above there are unwritten rules on who talks when, how to bid for participation and unsolicited responses are subtly ignored. The classroom dialogue consisted more of teacher explanations than students explaining or probing the teacher on the functional writing being learnt. This observation is corroborated by Alexander (2000). He argues that classroom talk defines the power structure in the classroom. He asserts that teachers should surrender more control to the students who is the core of learning because it is his/her behavior that needs to be adjusted if learning is to take place. Classroom talk consisting of excessive teacher explanation and strict rules kill spontaneous thinking as it denies students control and opportunity to show what he/she can write or say. (Baines 2008).

4.4.2 Is the Talk Teacher or Student Dominated?

The classroom talk can either be students or teacher dominated according to Mercer & Littleton (2007). The study observed that teachers did much of the talking. The teacher talks almost entirely through the lesson with students listening to the teachers' presentations. Although there were some lessons which were wholly presented by students, teachers talked most of the time with students mostly interjecting through a question or giving an answer to a teacher's question. The transcript 2 below shows the length of teacher discourse against that of students.

The transcript of talk in a form three class. Topic Writing Memoranda

Teacher: (Writes the topic on the board) So what did you find out about the memo?

Ah, is it internal or external in communication?

Student: I...think it...internal.

Teacher: Yah, what do you mean by internal?

Student 2: Coz...coz its used inside the org...school...

Teacher: Yes...er...but not just a school, any organization, such as bank, courts, do you understand? How should a memo be?

Class: mmmh...?

Teacher: Yes, What did you find out about its length, is it short or long? because it passes news... Information on one area or... subject. Can we get examples of such information?

John: Change of diet (laughter)

Teacher : (Laughing as well). Change of diet from what to what?

Class. (Spontaneous answers) Chapati...meat.... sausages... eggs...

Teacher: That's enough...Enough... Yes. Students and food (more laughter) so who

would write that memo?

Rose: May be the, the principal? The cateress

Dan: Or the head boy if it... is for ah...er... Single day... like sports....

Class: aaaah....

Teacher: We are not changing the school meals (more protestations) quiet now...qu..**Aggrey**...Yes... Memos communicate important changes...

Teacher: Yes, in an institution or organization such as a school, church or even a multinational company like coca cola.

From the transcripts it's evident that the teacher takes more turns than the students. His discourse is longer and more elaborate. As a result, the lesson can be said to be teacher dominated. However, the length alone cannot be used as a measure of learning. Whether the talks probes students' earlier knowledge, improves learning and creates students who can independently write (Mayhill 2006) Too much teacher talk has been linked with limited chance of knowledge construction in learners (Hardman,2005 Smith and Wall, 2003).

4.4.3 Structure of Classroom Talk

Notably, the classroom exchange had a peculiar structure which seemed routine. The teacher would initiate the talk mostly through a question, the learners would respond by giving correct or incorrect responses, the teacher would comment on the correctness or lack of it, then she would explain a little more or move on to other areas of the functional writing. The transcript 3 demonstrates the exchange. (Topic; **writing a recipe**)

T: What is your favourite meal?

S: (Chorus) Chapati...Rice...Chicken.... pizza...mukimo..

T: (Ignores the chorus responses) Jane?

J: Rice and fried chicken....

Class: (giggles)...wow...smack...oooh...wee...

T: Rice and chicken sounds quite yummy...

Class: Yees.... yah....

T: Yees...? The instructions on how to prepare any food such as rice with chicken is what is called a recipe.

The above structure where the teacher initiates and controls the direction and even the pace of classroom talk is replayed in many classes across the world (Hunzer 2014). The pervasiveness of this exchange is what is termed as teaching. However, learning (in this case writing) may not take place until the learner genuinely wants to know and probe the content by making relevant questions for himself. (Myhill 2006)

The purpose of the questions in the writing class is sinister because the teacher seems not interested in why Janes favourite food is Rice with chicken or the other students' response. The exchange is used to set an artificial background on which to anchor the definition and further development of the content. The students seem aware of the routine and the rules therein. The student would be surprised if the teacher took more interest in the students' response. This exchange has been blamed for improving student participation with little communicative and learning outcomes: (Hamilton 2003 & Hargreaves 1994).The teacher is not really interested in the student talk and does not listen to what the student has to say. The status of talk above cannot contribute to meaningful acquisition of writing skills and has been blamed for low competence in writing in British school, (Cadzen 2010, Alexander 2000).

The structure of classroom talk in terms of who initiates and whether there are patterns is a concern of this researcher.

Transcript: Lesson on Letters of Application: f 3

Teacher: (greetings, introduction of researcher and topic) so let's wait for that girl who is about to come.... (Noise).... Be quiet....so we are going to look at...Ah...em... A letter of Application.... ah...And... earlier on we had said we have two types of letters, which are they...ehe...

Students: (Chorus) Formal letters

Teacher: Yap...We have formal letters and...Ehe... (Points to a student)

Millie: Friendly or informal letters

Teacher: Yes, we have the friendly or also called informal...?

Students and teacher: Letters

(.....sections of transcript skipped)

Teacher: Lets first look at the format which is also called layout of the formal letter...ehe... Someone to give us an example

(Initiation)

Polly: It has two addresses (Response)

Teacher: Yes, it has two addresses namely...? (Feedback+ initiation)

Student: The sender and recipients address (Response)

Teacher: Yes, the senders and recipients.... (Feedback+ initiation)

Class: (Chorus) Address

Teacher: Address...Where do we write the senders address?

Agnes: At the top right hand side...

Teacher: Can you come forward and write for us (student walks to the blackboard)

as she writes...aha...Where do we write the recipients address.....

The Initiation Response and Feedback exchange as postulated by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), Mehan, (1979) is evident in the exchange where the teacher opens the exchange with a question or suggestion, the student comments or answers, finally the teacher gives a confirmation with a brief or elaborate explanation of the correctness (or otherwise) of the answer. The rest of the lesson proceeded with more or less the same structure observed. The teacher uses questions to elicit the responses she desires and reinforces it by providing the explanation or comment. The findings show that students are not deeply engaged in the classroom talk and the I-R-F is very common in the functional writing classes. The students' participation in the lesson is very limited, findings confirmed by Bunyi (2005) Alexander (2000), who faulted the I-R-F because, the feedback instead of opening up more discussion on the idea, marked a closure to the line of thought after the evaluative remark by the teacher.

Basic rules governing classroom Talk

There were some basic rules observed in the classroom talk. The students were to lift their hands up to contribute to the lesson and it was the teacher's prerogative to choose what student would answer what question. The teachers ignored answers from students whose hand was down even if the answer was right. This rule was disregarded where chorus answers were given and accepted by the teacher. The teacher did not criticize any student who answered questions unsolicited. The transcript below demonstrates this.

Transcript 5: The lesson was in form 1 on the format of official letters.

Class: Yours faithfully

Teacher: Yes and then after that...

Student (hand not up): The signature..

Teacher: (Ignores the answer) Yes Christine

Christine: The official signature and then your full name

Teacher: Yes, your signature and your full...

Class: (chorus answer) Names...

Student: (hand up) Excuse me teacher...er...should your names be in capital letters or...

Teacher: Er...It's not a must but capitalize the first letters of your name like (writes on the board) like...if you are Judy Wangechi...the J...For Judy and W... for Wangechi.

Student 2: Excuse, teacher, can we write the date in numbers?

Student: (unsolicited response) Nooo...

Teacher: (ignores the response) Numbers ...er..for example 12/10/2016?...We said there are different formats for writing dates

Student 3: In the body, how do we write dates?

Teacher: Body? Which dates....aha...?

Student 3: Example ...you were sick and...You are giving an explanation....then you say...mmmh...on this and this date I was in hospital and so you write the date in which format...?

Teacher: It is better to write in words...okay

Class: (Chorus) Yeees...

It's clear from the transcript that learners who volunteer answers without bidding for

opportunity risk being ignored by teachers yet the student could have gotten the answers in the spur of the moment. This rule seems to deny students opportunity for spontaneous participation in the functional writing lesson. The teacher does not appoint a student to respond to a student question but answers all the questions, lastly from the transcript the teacher does not justify her answer e.g. when she says there are different formats of writing dates and then adds that it is better to write in words, she does not explain why. The teacher assumes that the student knows the reasons behind the answer which may not be necessarily correct. The findings are corroborated by Mercer (2007) who posits that the rules in class though they maintain order but the rules may not help students use talk to pursue participation that will enable the learners explore writing ideas more freely

4.5 Challenges that Teachers Face in Teaching Functional Writing

The third objective of the study was to find out what challenges teachers of English faced while teaching functional writing. The teachers were interviewed on this and table 4.14 presents the findings.

Table 4.3: Challenges in teaching functional writing

Challenge	Frequency N=30	Percentage
Irrelevant or outdated functional	15	50
High teaching workload and wide syllabus	25	83
Negative students attitude to writing	10	33
Inadequate resources for ICT integration	27	90

4.5.1 Irrelevant or Outdated Functional Writing

As highlighted in table 4.14, 50% of teachers felt the syllabus was not reflective of the current writing trends. Functional writing such as telegrams and emphasis on how to write fixed-line telephone messages as opposed to mobile text message, and Traditional Indented Format in letter writing which had been overtaken by the block format of letter writing. All teachers (100%) said this was an obstacle since they couldn't demonstrate instances when students would write telegrams whereas text messages and mobile money transfer is the practice. An analysis of the English syllabus and some of the current course books recommended by the KICD contained such content. Example is the informal letters to family and friends. Majority of the teachers said the current crop of students had never written a real letter via post office apart from the Success Cards sent during examination time. A lot of communication of informal nature was through the text messaging (SMS), the social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Yet such emerging communication channels are not addressed by the syllabus. The findings indicate that what teachers sometimes offer may have little practical value in the world outside the class. The findings are confirmed by Onchera (2013) who says that for functional writing to be enjoyable, learners should find its expression in the world of reality.

In addition, a three quarters of the teachers (75%) complained of conflicting formats for functional writing in different teaching resources. This led to confusion because teachers did not know what format to recommend to their students. This was blamed in part to the fast changing technology and use of books that are not updated to reflect the changing trends. In one instance the English textbook had addresses entirely capitalized in one section and in the other they were written in lower case.

Wanjala (2015s) blames teachers for over-reliance on textbooks and failing to take lesson planning seriously which leads to this confusion.

4.5.2 A high Number of Teaching Lessons

From table 4.14 above, over three quarters (84%) of teachers interviewed felt that they had a high number of teaching lessons. Majority had between 28 and 30 lessons with 5 teachers having 32 lessons. Though this load is within the ministry's recommendation, the teachers expressed their helplessness in creating time for constant assessment of functional writing done by students across the term. Best writing practices recommend that the average time spent on actual functional writing should be about 4 in 5 days meaning that functional writing should be quite frequent. (Manuel, 2016). To create efficient writers, the teacher needs to scaffold and model the writing they require from their students. (Manuel, 2016). If this is to occur, the teachers felt that their lessons should be reduced to at least 24. These teachers said they had other responsibilities such as preparing students for music and drama competitions and games. The high lesson load was blamed for inadequate time to mark functional writing and even prepare lesson plans. They said that they had to quickly go over the functional writing in the first three years of the students' school time because the functional writings made 20% of the mark in the terminal examinations. Consequently, teachers had to teach even those reserved for upper classes at the lower level.

When students were asked how often their functional writing books were marked the responses show teachers who are hard pressed for time. The table below shows the frequency.

Table 4.4: The frequency of students functional writing essays marked

	Frequency	Percentage
Never	10	5
Sometimes	128	67
Frequently	50	26
Always	3	1
Total	191	99

Only a small number of students (5%) had their work never marked while a more than half (67%) had their work marked sometimes. This indicates that there may be no sufficient feedback on students writing as teachers do not mark the functional writing as frequently as required. Indeed 1% had their work always marked. The findings are confirmed by (Silva, & Matsuda, (2012) who posit that teachers do not create time to listen and read thoroughly their pupils talk and writing and make informative comments on the students' work.

The failure to mark frequently is against best writing practices because according Manuel (2016) creating writing time makes student view writing as worthwhile activity. Adequate time for pair work, group writing and creation of collaborative learning is important if students and teachers are to share and celebrate achievements in writing and ensure writing that is experimental, fun and reflective.

The teachers said they found it hard to have students practice writing during class time and as a result, writing was done as homework or carry away assignments. Almost all the teachers said they felt that with over 45 students in their classes, they did not have time for the weaker students to be attended to and even to make elaborate feedback on the functional writing marked. Consequently, most of the teachers gave a numerical mark with little underlining and circling which might be

not be helpful in making students improve their writing. *'Marking for such a high number of students is tough. Sometimes I carry the students exercise books home but still feel I don't do enough scrutiny. I brush through the work'*

4.5.3 Students Negative Attitude to Writing

Most of the teachers 65% expressed concern in the students' attitude towards writing. Christabel said that students don't normally write at home and think that they only need to speak good English and get a GPA of A by working hard in sciences to pursue careers such as medicine Actuarial science and law among others. Most students don't see the need for functional documents away from examinations and the English class.

Other teachers expressed the same concern of negative attitude in students." *Most students feel that the mobile phone coupled with the internet will help them communicate easily at the touch of a button. Some students know that email and google services would be handy if they needed to communicate"* Said Miss Mercy. This attitude was said to be an obstacle to students learning the correct format and style of writing

Mr. Yeboa said that his students term writing as time consuming and uninteresting." *The students do not appreciate functional writing outside school since some said getting a good career has everything to do with the aggregate grade achieved at KCSE with very little to do with how well the student can write functional documents. My students feel that writing is for school and not something they will need to do for their everyday living beyond school"*. These teachers' assertions are

supported by Cocker & Ritchey (2015) who argue that students' perspective towards writing is wanting and hinders their uptake of functional writing skills.

4.5.4 Insufficient Information Communication Technology facilities

Teachers were asked in the interview about their use of computers to teach functional writing and whether their students used computers during school time to research on the functional writing taught. The responses are presented in the table below.

Table 4.5: Insufficient Information Communication Technology facilities

N=30	Never		Sometimes		Always
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage
Use computer to teach writing	23	76	7	24	0
Students access computer in their free time	25	83	5	17	0

From the table 4.5, over three quarters of teachers and their students never used computers in teaching functional writing. Yet research shows that use of computers makes writing interesting as teachers and students can edit, save and print their work for future reference or pin ups on the class notice boards. (Silva, & Matsuda, (2012) Teachers expressed lack of ICT as a great challenge because even though the world was technologically changing, schools had been left behind because even for schools that have computer labs, only Computer Studies students used the computers. *'The computer Lab is out of Bounds for students and even though teachers could access it, the computer studies class take a huge chunk of the time making it almost*

impossible to use computers to teach functional writing.” Mrs Christabel said. *” The world is moving from text to screen where students can change the font add graphics and enjoy writing yet our schools are lagging behind in computer use,”* Mr. Mwangalu added, decrying the lack of computers and internet connection to many schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

The study aimed at describing the teacher classroom practices in functional writing classes, analyze the nature of classroom talk and find out the challenges that teacher of English faced in teaching functional writing. After data analysis the following were the findings.

5.2.1 Teacher Practices in Functional Writing Classes

On the teacher practices in functional writing classes it was evident that the main teaching learning activities were teachers writing on the black board, students copying notes in the exercise books, teachers asking students questions and students answering, and teachers explaining concepts as observed in most the lessons. Moderately more frequently used (at 80%) were practices such as referring to the textbook or the teachers' notes and giving homework. Class discussions in which students worked in pairs or in groups accounted for 40% of the classroom practices while use of ICT was very rare at only 20% of the lessons observed. Teachers also chose writing topics without informing students, did not engage in whole class discussions, nor provided real examples of functional writing.

For most of the time teachers stood in front of the class and dominated the lessons. Teachers did not employ peer marking, role play and dramatization which may enhance learning of functional writing skills.

5.2.2 Nature of Classroom Talk in the Functional Writing Classes

The second objective was on the nature of classroom talk in the functional writing classes. From the findings it is clear that classroom talk is indispensable in the teaching learning process. However, the use of talk is diverse and could have beneficial as well as detrimental effects to functional writing. Teachers use talk to deliver content and enhance classroom participation. In addition, talk is used to get classroom control. The talk is grossly teacher controlled and guided with students talk limited to short precise answers. Another aspect of the talk is that there is the overuse of closed questions and the Initiation-Response-Feedback structure. Nevertheless, the talk is relaxed in most classes and students are encouraged to participate through many questions.

5.2.3 The challenges that Teachers Face

On the challenges that teachers face irrelevant content in the syllabus content was major hurdle (50%). Due to the fast changing technology, some of the functional writing tasks are outdated. This challenge was compounded by conflicting formats of functional writing (80%) Teachers also lack authentic real life demonstrations and have not embraced computers to make of functional writing easy to edit, save, print and share among the students. A wide syllabus led to teachers of English having a high teaching workload with other co-curricular responsibilities. The students' negative attitude towards writing also made teaching and learning of functional writing difficult.

5.3 Conclusions

From the findings this study concludes that teachers are using teacher centered classroom practices that are geared towards knowledge transmission rather than knowledge construction which could impact negatively the students' acquisition of functional writing skills. The classes are dominated by teacher questions with few students' questions. Teachers do not encourage students initiated classroom participation unless it is in the form of chorus answers. Indeed, though several studies highly recommend group work in teaching learning process, it is not common in functional writing classes.

Secondly, the classroom talk is very important but the study concluded that teachers dominate the talk giving students little room to explore ideas in the writing class by engaging in depth and genuine discussion on language and the format of functional writing. There is the pervasiveness of teachers eliciting responses, evaluating those responses then briefly giving a feedback which marks the closure of that exchange. The talk was aimed at driving the students to memorize the format with little room to question why there couldn't be alternative formats or even why the particular structure of functional writing was favored over another.

Thirdly, the study concludes that some of the functional writing skills being taught in our secondary schools are outdated. Also, failure to embrace ICT in teaching of functional writing has left teachers confused over the format of functional writing to teach in their classes. Moreover, teachers are not marking students' writing as frequently as possible so as to give them the necessary feedback on where to improve. As a result, the acquisition of functional writings skill is not effective.

5.4 Recommendations

The study came up with the following recommendations.

5.4.1 Recommendations Related to Practice

- i) Classroom practices in functional writing should shift from teacher based to student based with more group or pair activities.
- ii) Classroom talk should comprise more than teacher questions, explanations which aim at encouraging students to memorize but teachers should use talk to explore students' ideas as a foundation for higher levels of learning. Student-student talk and student initiated talk should be incorporated in the learning of functional writing.
- iii) ICT and real life demonstrations should be used in the teaching and learning of functional writing so as to make functional writing updated and relevant to the modern-technology -exposed student. Use of the internet to learn the functional writing will present the learner with the most current format, language and etiquette functional writing.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Study

- i) There is need for a more comprehensive study on the classroom discourse in writing classes in general as opposed to functional writing classes only.
- ii) There should be a study on student - to- student talk in writing classes to analyze its nature and contribution to acquisition of writing competence
- iii) Lastly, a study on the use of dialogic conversations in the study of literature set books in secondary schools should be conducted.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name of school..... Teachers gender.....

Name of teacher..... Teaching form.....

Academic qualification: B.Ed [] M.Ed [] Diploma []

Teaching Experience: over 15yrs [] 10-14yrs []

5-9yrs [] below 5yrs []

What are some of the most common teaching-learning activities in your functional writing lessons?.....

Why do you find yourself frequently using the activities highlighted above?

- i) How often do you use group work in your teaching?
- ii) Are you able to create time to mark the students writing frequently?
- iii) What is your thought on the place of group work in teaching?
- iv) Do you sometimes have student led lessons? If YES, what do you think about them?
- v) Talk is part of classroom. Between you and the students, who talks most of the time? Why?
- vi) Do you encourage student to student talk during your functional writing lessons? Why/Why not?

If students respond to your questions without lifting hand up, how do you react?.....

Do students ask you questions in class as frequently as you ask them? why/why not?

How do you use classroom talk in your teaching?

- To create classroom participation
- To get correct answers
- To probe students' prior knowledge
- To achieve classroom control

Identify at 5 challenges you face in teaching functional writing?

Thank You

APPENDIX II: LESSON OBSERVATION GUIDE

Name of school.....

Type.....

Date.....

Time of observation..... start..... End.....

Number of students..... Teachers name..... Gender.....

Topic.....

A. Classroom context

i) Room arrangement (Tick one option)

Rows..... Semi-circle..... Adjusted to instruction.....

ii) Description of lesson observed.....

B. Major ways in which classroom activities are organized.

As a whole group..... as small groups..... As pairs.....

Individual seat..... Work.....

Comment on approximate time spent on each structure.....

C. Major ways in which students engage in classroom activities

i) All students engage in the same activity at the same time?.....

ii) Groups of students doing differentiated activities at the same time?.....

iii) Comments.....

D. Major activities of students in the lesson

i) Students listened to a presentation by the teacher?.....

ii) Students listened to a presentation by another student?.....

iii) Followed specific instructions from the teacher?.....

iv) Copying from the blackboard?.....

v) Comment.....

E. Student classroom participation

(i) Choral

(ii) Individual Student response

(iii) Pupils questions

- (iv) Detailed explanation from students
- (v) Comments.....

F. Type of Teacher/ student questions if any

- i) YES/NO- (E.g. Have you ever made a speech at the assembly?)
- ii) Confirmatory (isn't it/ do you understand, is it clear?)
- iii) Open ended recall
- iv) Open probing questions
- v) Closed ended

G. Teacher- Student feedback

- (i) Teacher/student gives answer himself
- (ii) Teacher/student repeats the question/answer
- (iii) Teacher praises, E.g., very good Jane
- (iv) Rephrasing
- (v) Elaborates extensively
- (vi) Others
- (vii) Comment

H. What is the nature of classroom talk prevalent in the lesson?

Teacher dominated

Student dominated

Dialogue between teacher and Students

I. Who initiates the classroom talk?

- i) How do students bid for nomination?
- ii) How does the lesson proceed?
- iii) Is there talk between and among the students?
- iv) When are students allowed to contribute in the lesson?
- v) What is generally the content of the talk in the class?
- vi) Where does the teacher spend much of the lesson time?
- vii) How does the lesson end?

End

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Instructions

Please fill up the questions below as honestly as possible. Responses obtained will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used for this research only. Please do not write your name.

Name of school:

Your Adm No.:

Gender: Female: [] Male []

i) What are some of your thoughts on how important functional writing is?

ii) Are you happy with the way functional writing is taught in your class

Yes [] No []

If so, what are you satisfied about?

iii) What do you think is going right in the functional writing class?

iv) What are you Dissatisfied with in the teaching of functional writing?

v) What should teachers change in their teaching of functional writing?

vi) What things would you like to see happen in the functional writing lessons?

vii) Between the teacher and the students, who talks most? Why do you think this is the case?

viii) What do you have to say about how functional writing is marked by your teacher.

ix) Do students ask questions in your class, why or why not?

x) Do your teachers employ group discussion in teaching functional writing? comment on frequency.

Thank you

APPENDIX IV: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 8710901 Ext. 57530

Our Ref: E55/22862/2010

DATE: 4th February, 2016

Director General,
National Commission for Science, Technology
and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR KAMAU SAMUEL KIRIIRI- REG. NO. E55/MSA/CE/24998/2012

I write to introduce Mr. Kamau Samuel Kiriiri who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. He is registered for M.Ed degree programme in the Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies.

Mr. Kiriiri intends to conduct research for a M.Ed thesis Project Proposal entitled, "Secondary School English Teachers' Classroom Practices and Students' Aquisition of Functional Writing Skills: A Case of Kiambu County: Kenya".

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

**MRS. LUCY N. MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL**

EO/pw/m

APPENDIX V: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION (NACOSTI)



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349,3310571,2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245,318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
when replying please quote

9th Floor, Utalii House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No.

Date

NACOSTI/P/16/94689/13326

29th August, 2016

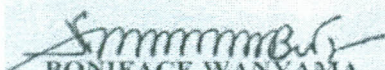
Samuel Kiriiri Kamau
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Secondary school english teachers' classroom practices and students' aquisition of functional writing skills: A case of Kiambu County: Kenya,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kiambu County** for the period ending **26th August, 2017.**

- You are advised to report to the **County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kiambu County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.


BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Kiambu County.

The County Director of Education
Kiambu County.

APPENDIX VI: RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. SAMUEL KIRIIRI KAMAU
of KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 0-223
KAGWE, has been permitted to conduct
research in Kiambu County

on the topic: SECONDARY SCHOOL
ENGLISH TEACHERS' CLASSROOM
PRACTICES AND STUDENTS' ACQUISITION
OF FUNCTIONAL WRITING SKILLS: A
CASE OF KIAMBU COUNTY: KENYA

for the period ending:
26th August, 2017

Applicant's
Signature

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/16/94689/13326

Date Of Issue : 29th August, 2016

Fee Received :Ksh 1000



Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

APPENDIX VII: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION COUNTY

DIRECTOR



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION State Department of Education

Telephone: Kiambu (office) 020-2044686
FAX NO. 020-2090948
Email: directoreducationkiambu@yahoo.com

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KIAMBU COUNTY
P. O. Box 2300
KIAMBU

When replying please quote

KBU/CDE/HR/4/VOL.II/ (178)

31st October, 2016.

Samuel Kiriiri Kamau
Kenyatta University
P.O BOX 43844 - 00100
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation letter Ref. No NACOSTI/P/16/94689/13326 dated 29th August, 2016.

The above named has been authorized to carry out research on "*Secondary school English teachers' classroom practices and students' acquisition of functional writing skills: A case of Kiambu County; Kenya*" for a period ending 26th August, 2017.

Please accord him the necessary assistance.

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KIAMBU COUNTY
P.O BOX 2300-00100 KBU
TEL: 020-2044686
FAX: 020-2090948

LEAH ROIKO
For: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KIAMBU COUNTY

APPENDIX VIII: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION COUNTY
COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, KIAMBU

Telephone: 066-2022709
Fax: 066-2022644
E-mail: countycommkiambu@yahoo.com
When replying please quote



County Commissioner
Kiambu County
P.O. Box 32-00900
KIAMBU

Ref.No: ED.12/1/VOL.IV/147

28th October, 2016

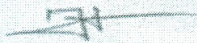
✓ Samuel Kiriiri Kamau
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation letter Ref No. NACOSTI/P/16/94689/13326.

You have been authorized to conduct research on "*secondary school english teachers' classroom practices and students' acquisition of functional writing skills: A case of Kiambu County; Kenya*". The data collection will be carried out in *Kiambu County for a period ending 26th August, 2017.*

You are requested to share your findings with the County Education Office upon completion of your research.


J. A. RATEMO
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KIAMBU COUNTY

Cc County Director of Education
KIAMBU COUNTY

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

All Deputy County Commissioners (*For information and record purposes*)
KIAMBU COUNTY

"Our Youth our Future. Join us for a Drug and Substance free County".