

PLANNING STRATEGIES: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT IN COMPOSITION WRITING IN ENGLISH AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN KENYA

Wakasa Diana Barasa, PhD Ed.

University of Eldoret, Kenya

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study was to determine how learners in public secondary schools in Kenya, use planning strategies in English composition writing. Based on 'the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing' by Flower and Hayes, the study specifically assessed learners' awareness and use of recommended planning strategies associated with quality composition writing. Planning is a cognitive writing process that has been empirically proved to be associated with quality composition writing, and hence one of the most effective composition writing skills. Therefore, it is important for learners to be equipped with planning strategies to enable them write quality compositions in English. This will alleviate the problem of learners' writing difficulties that leads to poor performance in composition writing at national examinations in secondary schools in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY: This article stems from a study carried out in Likuyani sub-county, Kenya, which examined the use of cognitive writing processes in composition writing in English Language among public secondary school students in Kenya. The study adopted descriptive survey design where, 200 students, randomly sampled from 8 secondary schools in Likuyani Sub-County, Kenya, participated in the study. A written task and a student questionnaire were used to derive information from the sample. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, (frequencies, and percentages).

FINDINGS: The study findings showed that, majority of secondary school learners are unable to effectively use planning processes during composition writing because they are not aware of the planning strategies that facilitate these processes, which are: outlining, note-taking, note-making, reading. This could partly explain poor performance in composition writing in national examinations.

UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY, PRACTICE AND POLICY: The study recommended that teachers should explicitly teach learners the use of planning strategies in composition writing, which are effective in composition writing fluency. Course- material developers should design course materials that incorporate teaching and learning activities that enhance the development of learners' cognitive writing processes in the teaching of composition writing. The findings of this study are critical to the development of appropriate instructional strategies and materials by curriculum planners that are responsive to learners' writing needs, and this makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of the writing community in terms of policy, pedagogy and instructional material development.

KEY WORDS: *planning strategies, cognitive writing processes, quality composition writing*

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on a study which was undertaken to establish learners' use of cognitive writing processes in composition writing in secondary schools in Likuyani Sub-County, Kenya. The Ministry of Education places great emphasis on the development of English Language in schools, and this is why, it is a compulsory subject in Kenya's system of Education. The importance of English as a medium of Education in Kenya cannot be overstated. English language is not only a service subject in the Educational curriculum, but it is also the official language of communication, both in schools and higher institutions of learning, and outside the Educational circles. English is also the language of international communication- (LWC). For this reason, it is accorded more lessons; 6 and 8 lessons- per week, in lower and senior classes respectively, (KIE Syllabus, 2002), and is given clustered importance in Kenyan university courses, (JAB Booklet, 2006). Therefore, the development of all the four language skills is mandatory.

Writing is one of the most important language skills to a student in Kenya. In compliance with the Kenya Secondary School English Syllabus, (KIE, 2002), writing skills train the learner to be organized and to think critically and creatively as they respond to situations. The ability to write well is essential for success in any academic discipline because it is the instructional and assessment medium both in the classroom as well as in the National examinations. Writing is also a lifelong skill, as it is part of personal development. However, studies continue to show that composition writing is still a major challenge to learners in Kenya. It is therefore imperative for writing learners to be equipped with the necessary composition writing skills, one of which is planning strategies in composition writing.

The literature reveals that, Planning is one of the most effective composition writing skills. Planning is a cognitive writing process that has been empirically proved to be associated with quality composition writing. Planning is the act of building internal representation of the knowledge that will be used in writing. It involves the sub-processes of *generating ideas* from the long-term memory, *organizing* those ideas logically, and *goal-setting*, all of which guide the writer during the actual writing, (Flower & Hayes, (2014). The process of planning requires a writing learner to master grammatical skills, organizational skills, language fluency, creative writing as well as mechanics of writing. Planning is therefore a fundamental component in composition writing process.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Composition writing fluency in English continues to pose a big challenge to secondary school learners in Kenya. Dismal performance in English in National examinations has been largely blamed on learners' poor composition writing skills. Mastery of fluency in composition writing is a fundamental aspect of language development and use, especially in the English language subject which is a compulsory subject at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education, (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, (KCSE). Writing skills are examinable at KCSE and KCPE levels, through composition writing, which is a compulsory paper. At KCSE, candidates are required to write 4 compositions, each of which accounts for 20 marks, totaling to 80 marks out of 200 marks awarded in the 3 papers examined in English. According to the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) report, (2017 -2020), released in 2021, paper 1 and 3, in which composition writing is examined, performed dismally compared to the other skills. Furthermore, studies done on composition writing in Kenyan schools, indicate that English as Second Language (ESL) learners still experience difficulties in mastering the writing skill, (Kemboi, G. 2018; Magut, 2019; Khalayi, 2019; Ouma, B. & Oloo, S. 2014; & Kochung, 2014). Therefore, there is urgent need to ensure that writing learners are equipped with requisite composition writing skills to enable them improve in composition writing.

Many composition studies have focused mainly on other issues like, factors that impact on L2 writers' composing skills, (Kemboi, 2018), strategies used in teaching English composition, (Kochung, 2014), and effect of gender attitudes on composition writing, (Khalayi, 2011), among others. However, these studies have not interrogated the role played by the planning strategy, which is one of the cognitive writing processes in composition writing. This is the reason why the study was important since the findings not only attempt to fill part of this gap, but also contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the role of planning in composition writing. The findings of this study make a contribution to developing better instructional strategies that will assist learners to overcome their writing challenges and master writing fluency.

The purpose of this study therefore, was to assess learners' use of planning, one of the cognitive writing processes in composition writing in English Language, among learners in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya

1.3 Study Theory

The study was based on 'the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing' by Flower and Hayes, who used this model to observe the processes that writers employ during the act of composition writing. These researchers report that during composing, there is a high interaction of cognitive processes that a writer employs. These are basic thinking processes and sub- processes such as planning, translating, and reviewing, which can occur at any time during the composing process. The appropriate orchestration of these cognitive processes is responsible for the quality of the resulting written text.

1.4 Significance of the study

These study findings are useful for policy, pedagogy, Instructional material developers, and curriculum planners. Teachers will greatly benefit because they will adapt instructional strategies that should enhance fluency in composition writing. This, by extension, is expected to improve performance not only in English language as a subject, but also in all other subjects offered in the curriculum, since they are all assessed in written English except Kiswahili. This should then, raise educational standards nationally. Since most formative and summative assessment is conducted in writing, fluency in this skill is very significant. Instructional material

developers will be able to develop teaching/ learning materials that give learners more opportunity to practice planning skills in composition writing, in class. Curriculum planners will be able to design a language curriculum that is more sensitive to learners` writing needs in so far as planning skills for composition writing strategies are concerned. All the benefits thus far discussed will have a trickle-down effect to the learner, who, in this case, is the final beneficiary. In this way, therefore, the findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the teaching of composition writing, and policy formulation on effective instructional strategies and course materials.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Role of the Planning Process in Composition Writing

Writing is a complex process that requires the author to be aware of, and combine various components of language skills successfully. L2 writing becomes a conscious process especially if the L2 orthography is different from the learner`s L1, and if the rhetorical style of the L2 is vastly different from that of the L1. (Silva, 2019), asserts that, L2 writers spend less time planning and organizing ideas and have more difficulties with these steps. To counter this, the scholar suggests that, L2 instruction should include time for planning both content and form, for generating ideas as well as for improving accuracy. Silva`s findings underscore the centrality of the present study, which sought to assess L2 learners` use of planning processes, in composition writing. This is because, when a writer plans less, has difficulties generating ideas and organizing them, and does less goal- setting, that is, he/she has difficulties utilizing the planning process, will negatively impact the text produced. This underscores the importance of planning in composition writing.

According to Flower and Hayes, (2014), Planning, through the sub-process of goal- setting, is a key process that sets apart expert and novice writers since, it is the process that enhances a writer`s creativity and critical thinking during composition writing. Planning enables writers to construct a more elaborate representation of their goals, which they continue developing and modifying as they compose. They particularly develop explicit rhetorical goals for the text as a whole, and use these goals to guide retrieval of content. As a result, these scholars assert, they write quality compositions. It can therefore be posited here that, expert writers develop more elaborate plans, revise extensively as they compose and evaluate their work thoroughly as opposed to novice writers, and this is why, expert writers are able to write high quality compositions, as compared to novice writers.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (2017) argue that, the development of ideas during writing depends on how the writer strategically controls the retrieval (generating) of content from the long- term memory in order to suit the rhetorical goals. They posit that expert writers employ a knowledge- transforming model, which entails an elaborate representation of the rhetorical problem to be solved, and the use of goals derived from this process in guiding the generation and evaluation of content during writing. Consequently, expert writers exhibit evidence of reflexive thought during writing because they develop more elaborate plans prior to writing, elaborately modify these plans during writing, and revise their drafts extensively. This enables expert writers to tailor their texts to the needs of the reader, and in adapting their thoughts to their communicative goals, such writers also develop their understanding of what they are writing about- (rhetorical representation).

This is further confirmed by the findings of Flower and Hayes, (2014), who report that developing explicit rhetorical goals for the text as a whole, guides relevant retrieval of information which enables a writer to develop more elaborate plans, revise extensively as he/she composes, and evaluate their work thoroughly. As a result, such writers tend to produce effective texts. This therefore, underscores the fact that planning, which is one of the cognitive writing processes, has positive influence on the development of learner writing skills, regarding the quality of composition writing.

2.2 Planning Strategies

According to the assertions of (De La Paz & Graham, 2020; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2017; Quinlan, 2020; Kellogg, 2016), advance planning can reduce working memory demands by frontloading and isolating some planning- related activities, thus simplifying things at the point of inscription. Writers who use advance planning strategy tend to produce better quality texts. There are several advance planning strategies, some of which are discussed next.

2.2.1 Outlining Strategy

In the outlining strategy, writers generate and organize their ideas before writing after which, they focus on translation (actual writing) and revision. Kellogg, (2016), in his study findings, reports that making an outline improves text quality because as a writer outlines, they devote a greater percentage of composing time to lexical selection and sentence construction, (text generation), thus they spent more time composing the text. This scholar observes that in the outlining strategy, writers plan less during text production since it had largely been completed prior to writing, and further asserts that outlining is associated with high quality final drafts, as

it enables writers to better organize their ideas prior to writing, which then enables them to devote more resources to formulating these ideas effectively in text. Similar findings are reported by Quinlan, (2020). This therefore confirms that advance planning strategies improve overall writing efficiency.

2.2.2. Pre-writing Strategy

This is the generation of ideas to be used in producing the text, which is done through brainstorming- (critical thinking), note-taking, note-making, discussions, organizing and developing background knowledge, and researching for information, referred to as reading, (Silva,2019). These activities are useful in eliciting, organizing and developing background knowledge, dictating, and researching for information. Similarly, Beare, (2021), established that effective strategies used by writers during content-generation were: brainstorming, and reading, also referred to as researching, for information from source materials. Intensive brainstorming and reading imply that a writer possesses good retrieval skills that enable them to retrieve relevant information from the long-term memory to meet the rhetorical problem.

The literature reviewed therefore underscores the critical role plaid by planning processes in composition writing, regarding high quality composition. The literature also exposes the gaps regarding L2 learner deficiencies in the use of planning strategies in composition writing skills acquisition, and hence explains the genesis of learner composition writing difficulties in secondary schools in Kenya.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey design. A written task and a questionnaire for students were used to collect data for this study. A self-administered questionnaire administered to the participants established the learner awareness and use of planning strategies. This enabled the researcher to explore the existing associations between Planning skills, and composition writing in English. Secondly, it allowed for generalizability of study findings to the target population. At the time of the study, Likuyani sub-county had a total of 26 public secondary schools, out of which 8 schools were sampled to take part in the study. The study sample comprised 200 form four students, randomly selected from the 8 schools. A written task and self-administered questionnaire were used in the collection of data. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, through the statistical package for social sciences program, (SPSS).

3. METHODS

3.1 Study Design

The study was conducted in Likuyani sub-county, Kakamega county, Kenya. The study used descriptive research design, to establish learners' awareness and use of planning strategies in English composition writing in secondary schools in Kenya. Data was collected through a questionnaire and a written task, which were administered to 200 form four learners, who were randomly sampled from 8 secondary schools, selected from a total of 26 public secondary schools in Likuyani, Kakamega county, Kenya. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, (Distribution frequency tables and percentages), through the help of statistical package for social sciences program, (SPSS).

3.2 Target Population

The target population for this study was all 1186 form four students in Likuyani Sub-County, Kakamega County, Kenya, who were taking English language as a subject. The researcher targeted the form four students in the district for information in the study. The total number of public secondary schools in the sub county at the time of the study was 26, out of which 24 are Sub –County Mixed Secondary Schools, and 2 are single – sex Extra-County Public schools. The total enrolment as at the time of the study, at 7982, (Likuyani Sub-County Enrolment Master Roll-2013).

3.3 Sample size and sampling procedures

A total of 8 schools were sampled for the study. The sample size was 200 form four students drawn from the 8 schools sampled for the study, 25 selected from each of the 8 schools. *Simple random sampling technique* was used to select the 8 schools sampled for the study, and 25 form four students from each of the selected schools. This ensured no bias in the selection of the study participants. In schools with more than one stream, *simple random sampling* technique was used to select one form four stream, from where the 25 form four students were randomly selected. Form four class was ideal for the study on the assumption that they had acquired the highest knowledge of planning skills for composition writing, and, covered most of the writing topics in the syllabus, and therefore, more knowledgeable than the lower forms.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques where, percentages, and frequency distribution tables, were worked out with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Science, (SPSS) Program.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study set out to establish learners' awareness and use of planning strategies in composition writing in English, in public secondary schools in Kenya. This was assessed through a self-administered questionnaire, and a written task, both of which were filled and written by 197 out of the 200 learners who were sampled for the study, (98.5% response rate).

The following are the results, which are also summarized in the respective Tables:

4.1 Students' planning strategies awareness

In the literature reviewed, outlining, rough drafting, note-making, note-taking, brainstorming, discussion, and reading, are cited as the main planning strategies used in composition writing. Table 4.1 is a summary of students' awareness of each of these strategies as revealed in the study, through the data collected:

Table 4.1: Student Responses on Planning Strategies Awareness

Planning Strategies	Frequency of Responses	Percentage (%)
Out-lining	125	63.5%
Rough-drafting	65	32.5%
Note-making	41	20.5%
Note-taking	13	6.5%
Brain-storming	48	24.0%
Discussion	73	36.5%
Researching (reading)	3	1.8%

The responses showed that, out of the 197 participants in the study, 125 (63.5%) are aware of the outline strategy, 65 (32.5%) indicated they are aware of the rough draft strategy, 41 (20.5%) are aware of note-making strategy, 13 (6.5%) are aware of note-taking strategy, 48 (24.0%) are aware of brainstorming, 73 (36.5%) are aware of discussion strategy, and only 3 (1.8%) are aware of reading strategy. From Table 4.1, the main planning strategies used by the students in composition writing include: outlining (63.5%), discussion (36.5%), rough drafting (32.5%), brainstorming (24.0%) and note making (20.5%). This therefore means that the outline strategy is the only effective planning strategy, most frequently used by learners in composition writing, followed by the drafting strategy, which is one of the most ineffective planning strategies. On the other hand, note-taking and reading are the least used strategies, while only a smaller number are aware of note-making, brainstorming, and discussion, all of which are effective planning strategies in composition writing, yet, the least used.

This means that most learners are not aware of most of the planning strategies that are effective. This finding leads to the conclusion that, most learners in public secondary schools in Kenya do not adequately plan before composition writing due to lack of awareness of effective advance planning strategies. Consequently, their composition writing skills development is impaired, and this could explain poor performance in composition writing at national examinations.

4.2 Report and Results of Written Task

In order to answer the research question, "How do secondary school learners use planning strategies in composition writing?", an assessment of learners' use of these strategies in composition writing was achieved through the writing task (composition) which they wrote. The composition task was rated on a 5-point continuum rubric, where by a score of 4-5, graded for a specific trait, indicated the highest ability of applying planning strategies in composition writing, while a score of 1-2 graded for the same trait, indicated low ability in the use of these strategies, and grade 3 was an average score.

Two aspects, measuring the use of planning strategies in composition writing were assessed. These were: Organization and Development and, the second one was, Consistency and Reasoning. Each of these aspects had specific traits which were graded on a 5- point continuum where by, grade 5 was awarded to a learner who exhibited the most effective use of planning strategies in composition writing, with regard to the specific trait examined. Conversely, grade 1 was awarded to a learner whose composition exhibited the lowest ability in the use of these strategies in the same trait examined. A learner who scored grade 4-5 in a given trait was described as having exhibited high ability in the use of planning in composition writing, while the one who scored grade 1-2 in the same trait, was described as having displayed low ability. Therefore, a learner who obtained grade 4-5

in most of the traits examined under each of the two aspects that were assessed, wrote a high quality composition as compared to a learner whose grades were mainly 1-2. A learner, whose grades were mainly 3, wrote a fair composition.

To obtain percentages, each grade category (1-5), was counted across all the 197 marked composition scripts, as graded for each trait, frequency distribution tables were then generated for the scores, and percentages worked out with the help of the Package for Social Sciences Program, (PSSP). The following is a detailed presentation of the findings of learners' performance on the written task.

4.2.1 Organization and Development

The aspect of organization and development was assessed through the following traits: Opening (OP), Coherence devices (CD), Paragraphing (PR), and Closing (CL). Table 4.2 presents results of learners' performance on the aspect of organization and development

Table 4. 2: Assessment of Planning Skills through Organization and Development in Composition Writing

Trait	Planning Skills Ability	Frequency of Responses	Percentage (%)
Opening	5	13	6.6
	4	25	12.7
	3	64	32.5
	2	45	22.8
	1	50	25.4
Total		197	100
Coherence Devices	5	0	0.0
	4	13	6.6
	3	49	24.9
	2	63	32.0
	1	72	36.5
Total		197	100
Paragraphing	5	35	17.8
	4	44	22.3
	3	57	28.9
	2	37	18.8
	1	24	12.2
Total		197	100
Closing	5	24	12.2
	4	36	18.3
	3	66	33.5
	2	45	22.8
	1	26	13.2
Total		197	100

The traits examined under this aspect are indicators of learners' use of planning (generating of ideas and organizing them logically), strategies in composition writing. Therefore, those who demonstrated high ability in these traits used effective planning strategies, and wrote high quality compositions, while those who showed low ability in the same traits were unable to effectively use these skills, and wrote low quality compositions.

In Table 4.2, results show that, on learners (OP), out of 197 respondents, 13 (6.6%) and 25 (12.7%) scored grade 5 and 4 respectively, 64 (32.5%) scored grade 3, while 50 (25.4%) and 45 (22.8%) scored grade 1 and 2 respectively. Therefore, a total of 19.3% of the respondents, demonstrated a high ability, while a total of 48.2%, registered low ability, and 22.8% demonstrated average ability in effectively bringing out this trait in their compositions. This therefore means that, a smaller number of respondents effectively used planning strategies in their compositions, while a greater number were unable to effectively use these skills.

On learners' use of coherence devices (CD), which was the worst performed, only 13 (6.6%) of the 197 respondents scored grade 4, hence, registering high ability in the appropriate use of coherence devices, while a total of 68.5% of the respondents scored grade 1 and 2, thereby demonstrating low ability in the same. 24.9% of the respondents scored grade 3, hence recorded average ability in the use of this trait. This means that whereas a small percentage of the respondents were able to effectively use planning skills in their composition writing, a greater percentage were unable to.

In terms of paragraphing (PR), the students performed better compared to the other traits since, of the 197 respondents, 35 (17.8%) and 44 (22.3%) scored grade 5 and 4 respectively, while 24 (12.2%) and 37 (18.8%) scored grade 1 and 2 respectively. 57 (28.9%) scored grade 3. Therefore, a total of 40.1% scored grade 4 and 5, hence indicating high ability, while a total of 31.0% registered low ability, and 28.9% demonstrated average ability in paragraphing. This shows that a greater number of the respondents were able to effectively use planning skills in composition writing, while only a smaller number were unable.

As for closing (CL), 24 (12.2%) and 36 (18.3%) of the respondents scored grade 5 and 4 respectively, while, 26 (13.2%) and 45 (22.8%) scored grade 1 and 2 respectively. Those who scored grade 3 were 66 (33.5%). Therefore, a total of 30.5% demonstrated high ability in this trait because their closing sentences served to clinch the main idea in their compositions, while a total of 36.0% recorded low ability because they did not close appropriately. It can be seen that a smaller number of respondents were able to effectively use planning skills in their compositions, while a greater number were unable to.

On the overall, results from the assessment of learners' ability to develop and organize their thoughts when composing, showed that, save for paragraphing, most of them are weak in this aspect of composition writing, pointing at the learners' inability to appropriately use planning strategies in composition writing. It can therefore be concluded that learners in secondary schools in Kenya experience composition writing difficulties due to lack of knowledge in the use of planning strategies in composition writing. Learners' inability to effectively use planning strategies in composition writing, leads to poor composition writing.

4.2.2 Consistency and Reasoning

This aspect was assessed through the following traits: Reasoning (RC), quality of details (Q1), and quantity of details (Q2). Table 4.3 presents the results of learners' performance in Consistency and Reasoning.

Table 4. 3 Assessment of Consistency and Reasoning in Students' Composition Writing

Trait	Planning Skills Ability	Frequency of Responses	Percentage (%)
Reasoning	5	1	0.5
	4	11	5.6
	3	45	
	2	69	22.8
	1	71	35.0
Total		197	100
Quality of Details	5	3	1.5
	4	18	9.1
	3	51	25.9
	2	66	33.5
	1	59	29.9
Total		197	100

Quantity of Details	5	18	9.1
	4	31	15.7
	3	57	28.9
	2	49	24.9
	1	42	
Total		197	100

The traits examined under this aspect are indicators of learners' use of planning strategies in composition writing. Therefore, those who demonstrated high ability in these traits used planning skills effectively in composition writing, while those who registered low ability in the traits were unable to effectively use these skills. The results presented in Table 4.3, indicate that, of the 197 respondents, 1 (0.5%) and 11 (5.6%) scored grade 5 and 4 respectively, while, 71 (36.0%) and 69 (35.0%) scored grade 1 and 2 respectively, and 45 (22.8%), scored grade 3 in RC. Therefore, a total of 6.1% registered high ability, while a total of 71% demonstrated low ability, and 22.8 recorded average ability in exhibiting logical progression of ideas that support the focus of their compositions (RC). This means that only a smaller number of respondents were able to effectively use planning skills in composition writing, while a greater number of them were unable to effectively use these skills.

On quality of details (Q1), 3 (1.5%) and 18 (9.1%) of the 197 respondents, scored grade 5 and 4 in Q1 respectively, while 59 (29.9%) and 66 (33.5%) scored grade 1 and 2 respectively. 51 (25.9%) scored grade 3. Therefore, a total of 10.6% of the respondents demonstrated high ability, while a total of 63.4% registered low ability, and 25.9% recorded average ability in presenting details that help develop each element of the composition through providing supporting statements, evidence or examples. This shows that a smaller number of respondents were able to effectively use planning skills in composition writing, while the bulk of them were unable to effectively use these skills in their composition writing.

A similar situation is portrayed in quantity of details (Q2). Out of the 197 respondents, 18 (9.1%) and 31 (15.7%) scored grade 5 and 4 in Q2 respectively, while 42 (21.3%) and 49 (24.9%) scored grade 1 and 2 respectively in the same trait. 57 (28.9%) scored grade 3. Therefore, a total of 24.8% demonstrated high ability, while a total of 46.2% registered low ability, and 28.9% portrayed average ability in supporting each point raised with sufficient details. This shows that majority of the learners were unable to give sufficient details in support of all the points raised in their compositions, as compared to the few who demonstrated this ability, which shows the inability of learners to effectively use planning skills in composition writing by majority of the respondents. Generally, these findings show that a greater number of respondents displayed low ability in the use of planning skills in relation to all the traits assessed in this aspect.

Looking at how the grading on all the traits was done, to score grade 5 in Reasoning and Consistency (RC), the composition had to exhibit a logical progression of ideas that support the focus of the paper. Similarly, in Quantity of details (Q2), all points are supported by a sufficient number of details through vivid description of events.

On the overall, based on the learners' performance in the written task in which their use of planning skills in composition writing was assessed, the general trend was that most of the learners were rated poorly in each of the two aspects that were examined. This shows that majority of learners who participated in the study were unable to effectively use planning skills in composition writing. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the students in public secondary schools in Kenya are unable to effectively use planning skills in composition writing, due to the lack of knowledge of effective planning strategies in composition writing and this could partly explain why they write low quality compositions.

From the literature reviewed, out-lining, brain storming, discussion, note-making, note-taking, and reading, are planning strategies that are effective in the planning process, during composition writing, as confirmed by Beare (2021), whose study findings revealed that strategies that facilitate content-generation during the writing process are: discussion, brainstorming, note-taking, note-making, and reading. Rough-drafting strategy was found to be ineffective as revealed by (Silva, 2019; Kellog, 2016; and Quinlan, 2020). Beare (2021), reported that intensive brainstorming and reading (researching for information), imply that a writer possesses good retrieval skills that enable them retrieve relevant information from the long-term memory, which enables a writer to meet assignment parameters. This therefore means that learners who use these planning strategies are more likely to write quality compositions than those who do not.

However, the present study findings revealed that a smaller number of learners are aware of, and use these planning strategies, which have been empirically proved to be effective planning strategies, in composing high quality texts.

These study findings compare well with the study conducted by Silva (2019), who investigated the difference between L1 and L2 writers, and revealed that L2 writers did less planning because they found it difficult generating content, did less goal-setting, and had more difficulties in organizing generated material. The study concluded that L2 writers find it difficult to manipulate planning processes involved in text production, which are: generating ideas, goal-setting, and organizing of generated material, all of which are sub-processes of the planning process in composition writing. This therefore means that majority of learners are unaware of strategies that facilitate the planning process in composition writing, and this impacts negatively on the development of their composition writing fluency.

Moreover, the present study shows that a greater number of respondents used the outlining strategies, while only a smaller number used the rest of the planning strategies which are equally effective. This means that majority of the learners plan less because they are unaware of most of the effective planning strategies, and this has a negative impact on their composition writing ability since, they do not generate enough content to enable text generation.

Further, the results also showed that a greater number of respondents reported that they use the rough- draft strategy, yet it has been empirically proven as ineffective, as reported by Kellogg's study (2016), who compared the effectiveness of the outlining and the rough-draft strategies on the quality of composition writing, among student- teachers. The study findings revealed that, the outline strategy was effective in planning and was associated with high quality compositions, as compared to the rough draft strategy. The explanation being that, outlining enabled writers to better organize their ideas prior to writing, which then enabled them to devote more resources to formulating these ideas effectively in the text.

These results were validated by the findings of Quinlan's study (2020), of middle- school children who were writing narratives. This means that majority of learners do not plan adequately because they are unaware of effective planning strategies and so they use ineffective strategies, consequently, they write poor compositions.

Based on the present study findings, as validated by various study findings in the literature reviewed, it is evident that majority of learners do not adequately plan for their compositions because they are not aware of effective advance planning strategies which are associated with high quality texts, as postulated by (Bereiter & Scadarmalia, 2017; De La Paz & Graham, 2020; Quilan, 2020 and Kellogg, 2016), who note that writers who use advance planning strategies tend to produce better quality texts.

It can therefore be concluded that most learners in public secondary schools in Kenya do not adequately plan before writing compositions because they are unaware of effective advance planning strategies, which are important in facilitating the planning processes in composition writing, and this negatively impacts on the development of their composition writing skills, which could be one of the factors affecting their composition writing fluency. Therefore, there is need for writing teachers to explicitly teach effective advance planning strategies in composition writing, since an awareness and effective use of these strategies are an integral component in the composing processes

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings showed that, majority of secondary school learners are unable to use effective planning processes such as outlining, note-taking, note-making, brain-storming, discussion, and reading, during composition writing because they are not aware of the planning strategies that facilitate these processes. As a result, they do not write quality compositions. This could explain learners' dismal performance in composition writing at national examinations. The study therefore concludes that, mastery of the planning process can enhance the development of learner writing abilities in composition writing. Therefore, there is need for Writing Teachers to explicitly teach effective advance planning strategies in composition writing, since an awareness and effective use of these strategies are critical in the development of learner composing abilities. This could address the problem of poor performance in composition writing at the national exams.

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