

Investigating The Teaching Of Composition Writing In Senior High Schools In Ghana: A Case Study Of Form One Students Of Bolgatanga Girls Senior High School

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Abstract: The study sought to investigate the teaching of composition writing in Senior High Schools in Ghana with Bolgatanga Girls Senior High School as a Case study. It discussed the problems associated with the teaching of composition in senior high schools using form one students in the selected school. This was achieved through the study objectives which were to: establish the challenges teaching and learning of composition writing, investigate if there are adequate resources to teach composition writing, to find out the techniques teachers use to teach composition writing and offer suggestions to help teachers and policy makers to develop strategies that will help both teachers and students in making composition writing interesting and effective. The study employed descriptive survey research design. Data was collected through teacher and student questionnaires. Both close and open ended questionnaires were used. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that composition writing is not taught effectively in schools. It was also very evident that both teachers and students face challenges such as inadequate resources, heavy work load on the part of the teachers and lack of motivation, mother tongue influence and limited use of English Language both in school and at home. It was revealed that senior secondary schools large class sizes making it impossible for the few English language teachers to teach, give sufficient exercises and marking them. The study recommends that, teachers should give students task writing that motivate them, use methods that are learner centred such as dramatization, role-play and group writing. The study further recommend that school management and government should provide adequate resources and develop school language policies that will encourage the use of English language in our schools. The Ghana Education Service (GES) should post more trained and qualified teachers to secondary schools to curb the issue of work load so that language teachers will have sufficient time to teach students composition writing.

Keywords: Investigation, questionnaires, analyzed, composition, senior high school, research, recommendation.

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The decision to undertake a research work into the teaching of composition writing in senior high schools struck the researcher when, first, he had interactions with many senior high school (SHS) graduates particularly those in the area where he lived and taught English Language for almost ten years.

One fact is that the students' poor competence in spoken English through his interaction with them prompted the researcher to find out about their performance in the English Language paper at the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). It was discovered that most Senior High School graduates in the region, especially those in the Bolgatanga Municipality equally performed poorly in the examination.

The fact that English is the language used as the main medium of instruction in Ghanaian Schools right from the basic to the tertiary levels and the fact that every Ghanaian

school child should be able to express him or herself well in the language, both spoken and written, has led the researcher to choose to research into the written aspect of the Language.

Since most subjects in Ghanaian Schools are written and taught in English, a good control of the language is an effective way of using it to achieve better results in the other subject areas. This also influenced the researcher to make such a choice of study.

Again, in Ghana, job placement in most departments and organizations, both Government and private, depend much on the control one has over the English Language. Most of these organizations conduct their interviews in both the spoken and written aspects of the language, since it is the official language used for all transactions and administrative activities.

Most examinations in Ghana, especially, at the secondary and tertiary levels and also in the public and civil service entry and promotions are conducted in the essay form. It is, therefore, important for every educated Ghanaian to strive hard to gain competence in the English Language, most importantly, composition writing.

Individuals who acquire good writing skills, especially in composition will go a long way to be helped in their life long endeavors, since the language is used country and worldwide. Senior High School graduates who gain good competence and control over the English Language, especially in composition writing, will enhance their personal development and that of Ghana as a whole.

It is the challenging issues stated above that urged the researcher to undertake this study to determine the causes of these poor performances and to suggest ways of remedying them.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Before this research could be carried out successfully, the researcher had to look at what the problem really was or appeared to be.

The problem, as the researcher envisaged, emerged, first, from reading the Chief Examiner's (West African Examinations Council) Report of the 1993, 1994, 1995, 2007, 2015 etc., final examination, especially on the part of the English Language paper. Though, the paper is made up of four different sections (Composition/Essay, Comprehension, Summary and Objective tests), the remark clearly indicated that most candidates did not tackle the essay questions well, hence their low score in the paper. That did not mean they performed better in the other sections either.

The researcher has been an assistant examiner and now a team leader of the main examining body in Ghana. These experiences revealed to the researcher that many of the students had difficulty approaching the essay questions appropriately.

Again, the researcher was among a group of English Language teachers who organized remedial classes for the first two batches (1993 and 1994) Senior Secondary School graduates who could not make it in the English paper. The experience at these classes also showed that most of them answered the essay questions poorly.

Public outcry, especially in the mass media, about the poor performance of Senior Secondary/High School graduates,

particularly in English and Mathematics showed that there was and there still is a hinge somewhere. Some parents and guardians have even gone as far as pointing accusing fingers at English Language teachers, especially in the researcher's own district, for not doing their work well.

The above problem prompted the researcher to go ahead to investigate the nature of the problem, the root causes of the problem and to make attempts at suggesting possible approaches to the teaching of composition/essay writing in Senior Secondary/High Schools, in particular. For, this is the stage when the problem of composition writing can be addressed.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

When the idea of the study came to mind the researcher had the under listed purposes for carrying out the study. These include:

- ✓ To find out the nature and root causes of the problem SSS/SHS students, particularly those of SSS/SHS One face in composition writing.
- ✓ To come out with findings that will help the researcher to suggest improvements in the teaching of composition writing in Senior Secondary/High Schools.
- ✓ To offer useful recommendations on new approaches to composition writing for English Language teachers in Senior Secondary/High Schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Prior to the decision to carry out this study the following questions struck the researcher.

- ✓ What are the short-comings of Senior Secondary/High Schools students in composition/essay writing?
- ✓ What methods are used by English Language teachers to teach composition writing in the Senior Secondary/High Schools?
- ✓ What teaching and learning materials are available in Senior Secondary/High Schools for the teaching and learning of composition writing?
- ✓ What is the attitude of Senior Secondary/High School students towards composition writing?
- ✓ What are the influences of environmental and socio-economic conditions on both Senior Secondary/High School students and English Language teachers in the teaching and learning of composition writing?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study is that it will bring into focus updated approaches to the teaching of composition writing for English Language teachers in Senior Secondary/High Schools, especially those in form one (1), thus going a long way to improve students composition writing skills.

The findings and recommendations given by the researcher at the end of the study will help Education Authorities in providing the necessary teaching and learning materials for English Language teachers to go about their work efficiently and effectively.

It would open up aspects of the topic for future researchers to do further research into the topic after reading the findings of the study. Individuals who wish to improve upon their writing competencies will in no less way find this study very useful.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Since English Language is so broad a subject for the researcher to cover, he has limited himself to only new methods/techniques of teaching composition writing. Though areas such as comprehension, grammar and summary writing as well as oral English are equally important and pose problems to Senior Secondary/High School students, the most affected of all is composition writing, hence his choice. The researcher has also decided not to treat writing in general because of its broad nature.

Kinds of essay such as Narrative, Descriptive, Expository, Argumentative and other forms, will not be treated. Composition and the other aspects of English Language are in some way closely related because from the first skills of listening, speaking and reading skills, writing becomes the last but obvious skill the student must acquire.

The researcher has further restricted himself to Senior Secondary/High School form One (1) students because he feels that, once a student enters the Senior Secondary/High School, he or she should start the preparation towards the final examinations. Also, this is the class that the English Language teacher can correct a good number of errors created at the Junior Secondary School (J.S.S) level. It is also in this class that the English Language teacher can start employing all the necessary methods of teaching composition writing effectively.

In the researcher's bid to make the study understandable to all its readers, certain unfamiliar terms or concepts used in the text have been clearly defined.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

In this study, the researcher has organized it into five chapters. Chapter One (1) deals with the introduction which comprises (i) The Background to the study ; (ii) Statement of the problem; (iii) The purpose of the study;(iv) Research Questions; (v) The significance of the study;(vii) The scope of the study and chapter synopsis. In chapter Two (2) the Review of Literature to the study is treated, while chapter Three (3) treats the Research Methodology. This includes (I) Method of selection (ii) Instrument used (iii) Administration of the instrument and (iv) Problems.

The Presentation and Analysis of Data collection is treated in chapter Four (4) with the Summary of the main findings as well as Suggestions or Recommendations serving as the concluding chapter that is chapter Five (5).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have attempted in various ways to produce work on composition writing. Some have attempted defining composition in diverse ways. One of such scholars whose

definition cover what others have said about composition is Hornsby (1974). He defines Composition as: "an art or act of composing". For example, "A piece of writing or music, a type of printing, objects for a picture, or that which is composed, for example, a poem, a book, a piece of music, an arrangement of objects to be painted or photographed ; (especially) exercises in writing by one who is learning a language"

This definition embodies what Chambers (1972) and Merriam (1960) say about composition. According to these two scholars, "Composition is an exercise in writing prose and verse and the practice of writing."

Even though the definition covers a broad area of composition what interests the researcher most is the part that talks of composition as 'An exercise of writing by one who is learning a language'. This is so because the researcher's topic deals with students who are learning English Language in the Senior Secondary/High School (SSS/SHS).

Some of the scholars focus on the aims of composition writing, whilst others concentrate on the importance of Composition Writing. Yet other authors talk about the similarities and differences between oral and written compositions.

In treating the aims of composition, Raja T. N. (1987) states that composition writing helps to sharpen the intellect of the student and he is able to see beyond the surface appearance of his life. In addition, he continues, it establishes the right attitude towards spoken and written expressions and helps the student to develop fluency in writing and speaking.

Raja further treats briefly the steps in free and guided composition. Here he talks of choosing the subject or topic, outlining the composition; writing a rough draft and copying the composition neatly. It can be seen from the above that Raja does not treat the technique of teaching composition writing to achieve the aims he has stated for composition writing which the researcher is dealing with.

Lagan (1984), on his part, focuses on the importance of composition writing to the language learner. According to him, composition writing helps the student in other courses because most examinations, at all levels, are in the essay form. He again says that composition writing is important to the student because of placement in jobs in future. That is to say, many companies, organizations and departments use composition writing as a means of recruiting staff for office work. Lagan further states that composition writing makes the student a better reader and thinker, since one must read to be able to gather enough information and think carefully to be able to put this information into meaningful writing for his audience or readers to understand him. Lagan concluded his treatment of the importance of composition writing by emphasizing that: "Composition writing helps the student to make sound decisions not only in school or career, but in all phases of his everyday life stemming from his ability to recognize ideas and measure their validity."

Though Lagan brilliantly treats the importance of composition writing, he fails to treat the approaches which English Language teachers will use to teach their students to learn the art of composition writing effectively. It is for this reason that the researcher thinks that there is the need to

investigate the approaches to teaching composition writing in Senior Secondary/High Schools.

As stated earlier in this chapter, some scholars in their attempt to treat writing, and for that matter, composition, have dealt much on the similarities and differences between oral and written compositions. Gould, Yanni and Smith (1989), for example, have treated these aspects. They contend that both oral and written compositions are ways of transmitting ideas, thoughts and feelings. The two (oral and written composition) also enable us relate to our neighbors as well as inform, inspire and persuade our listeners and readers through both media. The main differences between the two media (oral and written composition) are that, whereas oral composition is verbal and more easily and directly used, written composition is a transcription of what we say orally, following a careful arrangement of our words on a page with specific idioms and format. These authors do not provide the techniques of teaching composition writing, thus creating a vacuum which the researcher hopes to fill by undertaking this study.

Another renowned author, West W. Walter (1966), treats different types of writing. He groups writing into four types basing this grouping on the purposes and style of writing. These four groups or types of writing according to West are:

- ✓ Telling a story or narration
- ✓ Writing to inform or exposition
- ✓ Persuasive writing or argumentative
- ✓ Descriptive writing

On telling a story or narrative, West, says it concerns describing a series of events which may either be real or imaginary, these may be told in their own sake or to demonstrate, support or prove an expository idea. West again maintains that the persuasive or argumentative writing is where and when the writer presumes that he and his readers hold different positions on the subject. He (the writer) then tries to get his reader to change his opinion. The writer in this type of writing must therefore appeal to both their morals and intellect by using logic, emotion, facts or propaganda. He argues further that this type of writing involves a commitment to reason, to fair play to democratic respect for one's `opponent` and to a sincere search for truth.

Writing to inform or exposition, according to him, is the attempt made by a writer to explain or clarify a subject or as the word exposition, suggests, to expose it. This type of writing aims, primarily, at understanding or reason, rather than at emotion or imagination.

Dealing with descriptive writing, West, states that the writer usually attempts to appeal to his reader's senses; recreating for him (the reader) the writer's original view of the subject being described, The descriptive writing very much appeals to the sensory impressions with the qualities of the subject and with the arrangement of language so as to reproduce the emotional tone of the original subject. He states further that in modern writing, description does not appear alone, but mostly used with narration and to support expository ideas.

West concluded by saying categorically that these forms; writing to inform, telling a story, persuasive and descriptive writing rarely stand alone in writing, They are combined forms of writing and any attempt to stick to one mode will make the writer handicapped. West's ideas are strongly

supported by Yemeh (1992). It could be observed from the above that, West has generously treated the four types of writing effectively, but he is silent on the methods the English Language teacher will use to teach these types of composition or writing, hence the researcher's zeal to investigate and come out with the appropriate approaches to teaching any form or type of composition or writing.

Yemeh (1996) also treats an aspect of writing in his work, Techniques of Teaching the Language Skills. On writing, Yemeh writes on the stages through which an effective composition could be written. He specifically states that, "When a piece of writing is taken beyond getting thoughts down on paper it should go through at least four stages."

These stages, according to him, are Planning, Drafting, Revision and the Write up. Planning, he says, involves talking, that is paired interviews, finding information from books, brainstorming, and drawing, telling stories, planning sheets, note taking and close observation.

On Drafting, Yemeh maintains that, pupils need not be unduly concerned about spelling and presentation. According to him, drafting involves the development of ideas formulated in the planning phase, focusing on meaning and content and writing/drafting in books or on paper.

At the revision stage, he states that, pupils are expected to read through their own first drafts and share it with friends or teachers. At the final stage, that is, the write up stage, Yemeh, gives the objectives where pupils are expected to describe experiences in simple terms and write imaginative essays. Pupils are also expected to express their points of view showing personal readiness and feelings in a legible, clear and in an organized manner. These apart, they are expected to be able to create narratives in such a way that they (narratives) are interesting. Another expectation of the pupils at this stage is to exercise sufficient control on the mechanics of the language and present a Standard English to be understood by anybody who reads their pieces. Yemeh completes his treatment of these stages by stating that at the write up stage, the pupils are expected to plan, discuss and draft their writing with some senses of audience and purpose as well as the awareness that language can be used in different ways and different circumstances.

The researcher is of the view that what Yemeh has said above are prewriting and post writing activities for a language learner or student to follow when writing. Though he has treated these stages of writing very well, he does not suggest or include the techniques that the English Language teacher should adopt to teach composition writing using these prewriting and post writing activities. The researcher, therefore, considered it a challenge to proceed with his study into the methods of teaching the topic.

Some other scholars, Bright and McGregor (1970) have also treated writing, particularly composition writing. These two writers have dealt with error correction in composition writing. Hence, they advise that English Language teachers should not merely fill students' composition pieces with red ink. For, this will dampen their spirit and interests and students might think that they can never make any headway in writing. Teachers of English Language have also been cautioned to avoid making derogatory remarks about students'

errors in essay writing, since this kills their motivation in writing.

The theories of writing composition syllabuses have also been touched briefly by Bright and McGregor in their work. They suggest that a composition syllabus in Secondary Schools should not consist of a lot of subjects. The syllabuses should also vary widely from school to school and be tailored to particular needs, environments, experiences and abilities. In addition, it is best for each school to work out its own composition syllabus in a systematic and detailed progression form. Bright and McGregor further state that without a proper composition syllabus students are in grave danger of being exposed to vagueness of approach, unnecessary repetition, aimless and shapeless lessons and pointless writing.

The two scholars have, in some way, suggested some steps of teaching composition. The first step is the preparatory language work for students. Hence, the necessary grammar and other language mechanics are dealt with. This can be done by choosing composition topics that will bring in the grammar we want students to acquire.

In the second step, they suggest that a problem be posed whereby the purpose and readers are defined. In this case, the teacher offers only situational guidance. Step three is where attention is focused, imaginations are worked and there is a warming up of linguistic machinery. Students at this stage could be divided into groups for discussion with the secretaries of the groups reporting after discussions. Here again, the teacher pays much attention for errors without interrupting to make corrections,

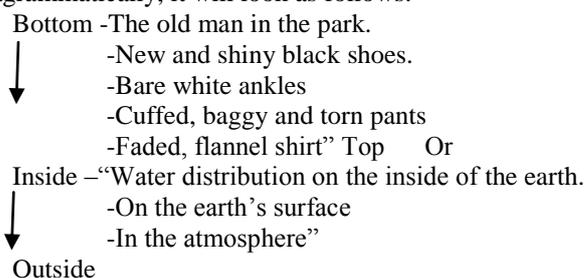
The fourth step, according to Bright and McGregor, is where the teacher provides study points or techniques in which students are made aware of relevant materials. Here students are guided to include everything needed and to exclude whatever is irrelevant when writing composition. Drafting constitutes the fifth step. They advise that students are asked to draft the composition individually. The teacher should encourage the students to use reference books and to ask each other or the teacher questions about doubtful points. Teachers are further cautioned here to let younger students write compositions in class.

Getting improvement in the drafting and producing the final draft make up the sixth and seventh steps. The drafts of students, according to Bright and McGregor, are collected and each group reads all the drafts of its members for purposes specified by the teacher. Then, each pupil is asked to do the final drafting and in step eight the final copy is proof read for slip of pen and other slips by at least a member of the group.

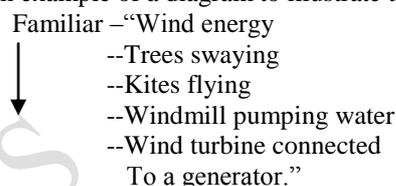
Another area of concern is the organizational structure of composition/essay writing. Organization of ideas in composition writing is very necessary at all levels of education especially at Senior High School level. Compositions that are well structured provide logical order of ideas. Norton D. E. (1989) suggests that teachers may introduce pattern forms through modeling activities in which they model the identification of various organizational approaches, diagrams paragraphs according to the organizational patterns and lead discussions in which students identify and describe the organizational patterns. Then they can write compositions using the organizational patterns that they believe are appropriate. Norton then states that, one way of organizing a

composition, especially a historical event or an autobiography of students is by telling the early events first.

The second method of organization is the spatial concepts of direction or physical details. This order, he said, may begin from inside to outside; from left to right or from top to bottom. Diagrammatically, it will look as follows:



The third method, Norton says, is to start with the simplest, or most familiar ideas and progress to the most complex or unfamiliar ideas. That means, students can begin with a review of information or concepts that the audience already know; then progress to new information that might be harder to understand without background information. Below is an example of a diagram to illustrate this order:



The Question- and-Answer form is another useful method. In this method, the writer asks questions and answers them. For instance:

Question: What clothes should you take to keep dry when camping?

Answer: Rain Coats.

Question: Discuss the characteristics of a good rain coat.

Answer: It must be dry always, devoid of patches, cover the body.

Understanding the advantages various organizational patterns will help students when they actually come to write their compositions. Probably the four methods recommended by Norton are the best and if followed carefully, will be tremendously helpful to students.

What these authors have left out are the various techniques of teaching composition writing. They have mentioned group discussions, lecture and demonstration as ways of creating awareness on a suggested topic, but not as teaching methods for the English Language teachers to use. The researcher, therefore, thought that the topic was not fairly treated and proceeded with the study.

III. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

From the analysis above, it would be observed that the problem of the poor performance of students, particularly, those in Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) in composition writing has been the concern of many of the writers or authors stated in the Literature Review. However, each of them has tackled the problem from different perspectives. Some of these

authors have tackled the problem from the definition of composition writing, the aims and importance of it, and the similarities and differences between oral and written composition, syllabuses and the steps in teaching composition as their approaches to tackling the poor performance of students in composition writing.

Despite these excellent attempts made by these authors to help solve the problem of poor compositions produced by students, they have all not touched on the approaches to the teaching of composition writing in senior secondary schools which the study of the researcher focuses on. The researcher, therefore, sees this study relevant, since at the end of it, suggestions on the techniques that are necessary for English Language teachers to use for effective teaching of composition writing in Senior Secondary/High Schools.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Turckman (1972) defines methodology as, “a systematic attempt to provide answers to questions.” From this definition it can be said that there are several methods involved when carrying out a research work so that the responses got would be used by the researcher to attempt to arrive at concrete findings and solutions to the problem in the question. These various methods that can be employed in a research work include primary and secondary research (questionnaires, observations, interviews, library research and discussions) depending on the aim of the researcher. Any one of these or a combination of the two or more must be used by the researcher for the desired results to be realized in a single research work.

In this chapter, the researcher has stated the population that was used for the research, the technique used to sample the population, the instruments used for collecting the data, the administration of the research instruments and the problems faced by the researcher in the cause of collecting data and administering the research instruments.

POPULATION

The population for the research work consisted of one hundred and sixty (160) senior secondary/high school form one students of the selected school, Bolgatanga Girls Senior High School, which is three (3) kilometers west of the Upper East Regional Capital, Bolgatanga.

The students are divided into various programmes of study namely; General Arts, General Science, Business and Vocational Skills. With these programmes, the class is further put into six (6) streams which include: SHS1 Arts A, whose elective subjects are either (i) History, Geography and Economics or (ii) History, Literature and French. The rest are SHS1 Arts B, where the students study English, French and Literature as their elective subjects and SHS1 Arts C, who study Economics, Geography and Mathematics as their elective subjects. For the Science class, Physics, Chemistry and Biology constitute their elective subjects. The Business class has only Accountancy and Management option, whilst the Vocational class offers two options which are (i) Food and Nutrition, Home Management and Clothing and Textiles and

(ii) Home Management, Clothing and Textiles and Visual Arts.

The table below shows the various class divisions and number of students who were given questionnaires to answer and the percentages.

CLASS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS GIVEN QUESTIONNAIRES	PERCENTAGE
SSS1 ARTS A	29	14	18.7
SSS1 ARTS B	22	10	13.3
SSS1 ARTS C	27	12	16
SSS1 SCIENCE	20	8	10.7
SSS1 BUSINESS	30	15	20
SSS1 VOCATIONAL	32	16	21.3
TOTAL	160	75	100

Table 1: Class Division And Number Of Students Who Were Given Questionnaire

As the number of students in each class varied as shown in the table above, the number chosen in each class also varied.. Therefore, seventy-five (75) students representing 46.9% out of the total of one hundred and sixty (160) students got the opportunity to answer the questionnaires.

As stated in 3.2 above, the total number of students involved were one hundred and sixty (160), while that of the English teachers involved were six (6). To arrive at the numbers to answer the questionnaires, the researcher used simple random sampling `Yes` and `No` criteria in both cases. By these criteria seventy-five (75) pieces of paper had `Yes` written on them, while eighty-five (85) of them had `No` also written on them. These were divided according to the number of students in each stream with each having a number of “yes” and “no” according to the specific number needed in each case.

The pieces of paper were sent to the various classes at various times as they were seated for classes. The papers were folded and put into empty chalk boxes and after shaking at intervals students were asked to pick a folded piece of paper each. Students who picked `Yes` had their names recorded and questionnaires distributed to them (all seventy-five (75) students brought together the following day. The research assistant, then explained the questionnaire, question by question to them and demonstrated on the black board how to respond to the questionnaires.

On the part of the teachers, five (5) of them out of six (6) were given the questionnaires. They were made up of two (2) females and four (4) males. Qualification wise, they constituted three (3) First Degree holders and three (3) Diploma Certificate holders. Four (4) of them were professional English Language teachers and the other two (2) were not, but were helping to teach English because of lack of enough English Language teachers in the school. Below is a table indicating the number of English Language teachers, the number who were given questionnaires and the percentage.

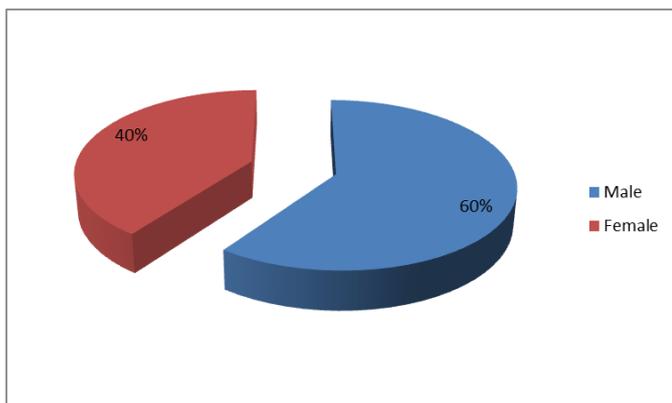


Table 2: Number of Tutors Who Were Given Questionnaire

SAMPLING/SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

As stated in 3.2 above, the total number of students involved was one hundred and sixty (160), while that of the English teachers involved were six (6). To arrive at the numbers to answer the questionnaires, the researcher used the simple random sampling 'Yes' and 'No' criteria in both cases. By these criteria seventy-five (75) pieces of paper had 'Yes' written on them, while eighty-five (85) of them had 'No' also written on them. These were divided according to the number of students in each stream.

The pieces of paper were sent to the various classes at various times when they were more orderly. The papers were folded and put into empty chalk boxes and after shaking at intervals students picked the folded pieces of paper each. Students who picked 'Yes' had their names recorded and questionnaires distributed to them: all seventy-five (75) students were put together the following day. The research assistant, then explained the questionnaire, question by question to them and demonstrated on the black board how to respond to the questionnaires.

For the tutors, five (5) pieces of cut papers had 'Yes' written on them and one (1) had 'No'. The papers were folded and put into empty chalk box. They were then asked to pick. The five (5) teachers who picked, 'yes' were given the questionnaires. The research assistant had earlier informed them at a departmental meeting through the Head of English Department. She (the assistant) took pains to explain certain areas and clarified certain parts of the questionnaires to the respondents.

In both cases, the research assistant gave them one week to answer the questionnaires after which she went from class to class and from teacher to teacher to retrieve the questionnaires.

INSTRUMENT USED FOR COLLECTING DATA

Originally, the researcher intended using four instruments namely, questionnaires, interview, observation and library research. However, certain unforeseen problems cropped up, forcing the researcher to rely on the questionnaire as the main instrument with Library research supporting it. One reason for using the questionnaires was the fact that the targeted school happened to be located where there was outbreak of the deadly disease, Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis (C.S.M).The school

authorities were forced to conduct the end of term examinations for the students to write and go on vacation. The researcher's intention of interviewing the students and observing a series of lessons in the class was therefore not carried out. The researcher could not also test the students since there was no free time due to the congested nature of the examination time table. The interview and observation would have helped the researcher to ascertain whether the responses given in the questionnaires were valid and reliable or not as well as offer the opportunity offered the researcher to have face to face interaction with the respondents to gather extra information that might otherwise have been excluded in the questionnaire. Observation would have helped the researcher overcome the problem in the information given by the respondents in the questionnaire. The researcher would have found out the methods and materials used by teachers to teach composition writing, just as testing the students would have given him (the researcher) firsthand information on the performance of the students in composition writing. The main data collection instrument used therefore, was the questionnaire for both students and teachers because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a big sample of the population and also gives objective data since participants are not manipulated in whichever ways by the researcher as they fill the questionnaires.

THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Two sets of questionnaire-items were used by the researcher: a seven-item questionnaire for the students and a ten-item questionnaire for the English language teachers. They were all structured in a way that both students and teachers to understand them. The items of the questionnaires were dichotomous which demanded both students and teachers to give "yes" or "no" answers. Multiple choice questions, where students and teachers were expected to choose from alternatives such as (a) positive (b) negative and (c) passive were also included in the questionnaires. Other types of questions were the rating scale which demanded responses such as bad, good, very good and excellent. The last type, which was very few, was the open-ended or self-expressive questions where respondents supplied their own responses. The students answered seven (7) questions each, while the tutors answered ten (10) questions each.

The questionnaires for the students dealt with the importance of composition writing and students own efforts to write essays on their own for teachers to mark or help them. Others were the reactions of the teachers towards students' composition writing and who to blame for poor compositions written by students. The other issue dealt with in the questionnaires was the availability of teaching and learning materials, especially, textbooks for composition in the school for students to use.

Questions for the teachers touched on assessment of their students' composition; the number of times they teach and give composition exercises and the reasons for their answers in the previous question. Issues such as whether teachers give their students homework and remedial classes to supplement normal class work as well as the reaction of students to remedial classes, were included in the questionnaire. The

researcher also asked questions on the methods used by teachers in teaching composition writing. The last areas of concern were for both teachers and students to state whether there are enough teaching and learning materials, particularly, textbooks, for teaching and learning essay writing. The teachers also asked to state whether in- service training courses are organized for them (English Language teachers).

Another instrument used extensively in collecting data was library research. This instrument helped the researcher a lot to get materials for the literature review stated in chapter two (2).

V. ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTRUMENT

The researcher was teaching in the selected school before he proceeded for further studies. As a result, he did not send any letter of introduction to the school. The researcher gave a verbal self-introduction to both students and staff in the presence of the headmistress of the school.

The questionnaires were posted to the research assistant. Written explanation of some problem areas as well as an appeal on the importance of the questionnaires were sent to the research assistant. A follow-up was made by the researcher to see how things went on. The questionnaires were completed and given to the assistant who in turn returned them to the researcher. Both verbal and written appreciation was made to the research assistant, the headmistress, staff and students for the co-operation offered the researcher.

The researchers wish to state that the use of questionnaires were very beneficial for the research work. The fact is that the researcher saw the use of the questionnaire as very efficient and served a good purpose, because respondents were offered the freedom and enough time to respond to the questions. The researcher did not also have to spend much time and money paying several visits to interview and make observations. Apart from the above, the researcher was able to get a fair number of the population of the students in the targeted class and the teachers to respond to the issues the study is aimed at getting. This would have been costly and time consuming if the researcher had used the interview method. The researcher therefore believe and wish to state that the findings obtained through the use of the questionnaire method are adequate for the study despite the absence of the use of the interview and observation methods.

PROBLEMS

It must be stated that despite the beneficial nature of the questionnaire, especially, its easy administration, the researcher faced problems during the course of its administration. One such problem was that two (2) students out of the seventy-five (75) who were given questionnaires lost theirs. That means, the researcher did not get a hundred percent (100%) responses. Table three (3) below shows the number of students who collected the questionnaires, those who answered and returned the questionnaires, those who lost them and the various percentages.

RESPOSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
RETURNED	73	97.3
QUESTIONNAIRES UNRETURNED	2	2.7
QUESTIONNAIRES TOTAL	75	100

Table 3

Also, one (1) teacher out of the five (5) lost his questionnaire.

The table below illustrates this.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
RETURNED	4	80
QUESTIONNAIRES UNRETURNED	1	20
QUESTIONNAIRES TOTAL	5	100

Table 4

Another problem uncounted was the failure of the respondents to return the completed questionnaires on schedule. They were given one week to answer and return the questionnaires, but they spent two weeks with the reason that the students were writing examinations while the teachers were invigilating these examinations.

VI. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The researcher in this chapter presents the questionnaires administered and the responses given by both students and tutors of English of SHS One (I) in the selected school, supported by frequency tables where necessary and the writer's personal comments in each case.

In doing this, each question is going to be stated with a table showing the frequency of responses with the percentage indicated. Once the school is a single sex (female only) school, the researcher saw the issue of sex to be unnecessary. The programmes, the General Arts, Science, Business and Vocational Skills. Table (1) clearly shows the various programmers and the distribution of students in each class.

Seventy-five (75) students were distributed with questionnaires to answer, but seventy-three (73) actually answered and returned the questionnaire, while the remaining two failed to account for theirs. Out of the five teachers who were served with questionnaire, four of them completed and returned them, with the fifth one failing to account for his. In all, each student was expected to answer seven questions whilst each teacher was to answer ten questions. These are accounted for in the frequency tables (1 and 2).

VII. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

IMPORTANCE OF COMPOSITION WRITING TO SSS STUDENTS

Q.1) What is the importance of composition writing to you as a student? Give only three of them.

The three main responses given by all the students were:

(i) composition helps me to broaden my knowledge (ii) to

improve my hand writing .grammar and arrangement of ideas, (iii) it help me to do better in other subjects.

This question was open-ended so each student was required to provide her own answer. It is from their responses that the researcher has summarized and indicated below in table.

IMPORTANCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
I. Broadening of knowledge	18	24.7
II Improvement in hand writing, etc.	30	41.1
III Performing well in other subjects	25	34.2
TOTAL	73	100

Table 5

From the table above it will be noticed that students know the importance of composition writing to them, especially, in improving their writing skills, grammar and also on as indicated by the high number of respondents that is 25 out of 58 students representing 43.0%.

NUMBER OF TIMES COMPOSITION EXERCISES WRITTEN BY STUDENTS

Q.2. how often do you write composition exercises in class?

This question required students to indicate whether it is weekly, fortnightly, monthly or termly. The various ones are show in the table below:

No OF TIMES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Weekly	15	20.5
Fortnightly	34	46.6
Monthly	12	16.5
Termly	12	16.4
TOTAL	73	100

Table 6

The high number of students, that is 34 representing 46.6% of seventy-five (75) students who responded in favor of fortnightly composition writing show that the teachers putting their effort. This may not be necessarily mean that they teach it effectively. They could be giving exercise alone. If the frequency of giving composition exercises is backed by equally effectively teaching, there is no doubt that students competence in composition writing will improve.

EFFORT MADE BY STUDENTS TO WRITE EXTRA COMPOSITIONS

Q.3. Do you ever write composition exercises on your own and give to your English teacher for marking?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	35	47.9
No	20	27.4
Sometimes	18	24.7
TOTAL	73	100.0

Table 7

As can be seen in the table (7) the responses require of students were 'Yes', 'No' and sometimes. As many as 35 students, representing 47.9% of the total number who write essays on their own and give them to their teachers to mark for

them, while as low as 18, which is 24.7%, sometimes do this. Twenty (20) representing 27.4 % do not make any effort to write their own essays for teachers to help them. The result of the responses further show that the students are keen to master composition writing by putting in extra efforts.

REACTION OF TEACHERS TOWARDS STUDENTS GIVING THEM EXTRA COMPOSITION EXERCISES TO MARK

Q.4.What is often your English teachers' reaction to this? The response expected here were 'Negative 'Positive' and 'passive'. The following were the responses:

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Negative	35	47.9
Positive	18	24.7
Passive	20	27.4
TOTAL	73	100

Table 8

The answers given in table 8, show that teachers reactions to students giving them extra composition exercises to mark is very discouraging since as much as 51.7 percent of them testify to this.

PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENTS IN COMPOSITION WRITING

Q.5.State two big problems you face in composition writing?

This question was again an open-ended one in which students were expected to give the responses in their own words. The major problems stated by majority of students were: (i) the introduction and conclusion of essays (ii) paragraphing (iii) grammar; that is spelling, punctuation, tenses and omissions (iv) understanding the questions and (v) organization and expression.

The responses are represented in table 9 below.

PROBLEM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
(i)Introduction and Conclusion	6	8.2
(ii) Paragraphing	10	13.7
(iii) Grammar	35	48
(iv) Understanding of Questions	10	13.7
(v)Organization and Expression	12	16.4
TOTAL	73	100

Table 9

The fact that over forty seven (47.9%) representing 35 of the students who face problems in grammar as far as essay writing is concerned shows that many of the students will not produce very good essays. It therefore means or explains that the teaching of grammar has to be intensified by English teachers, since it is the back bone for students to produce good essays.

WHO TO BLAME FOR POOR ESSAYS

Q.6 (a) The inability of students to write good compositions is their fault. (A)True (B) False.

If false, whose fault is it and why? Whereas question 6 (a) required students to give 'true' or 'false' answers, Q.6.(b) is left open for students to provide their own answers. Responses to question 6 (a) is represented in table 10.

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
TRUE	33	45.2
FALSE	40	54.8
TOTAL	73	100

Table 10

The results above indicate that forty (40) students representing 54.8% of the number of respondents who answered and returned the questionnaire do not agree that the blame should be put on students for producing bad compositions, whilst thirty-three (33), that is 45.2% agree that the blame should be put on students.

The responses for Q.6 (b) required students to mention who the fault should go to and give reasons for their answers. The thirty-three (33) students who favored that the statement in Q 6 (a) is false and put the blame on English teachers. The reasons given are as follows:

- ✓ There is unsatisfactory or poor teaching of composition writing right from primary to Junior Secondary School (J.S.S) level.
- ✓ English language teachers do not give enough composition exercises at both primary and J.S.S levels. When they did give at all, it was once every month or term.
- ✓ Teaching before and after the exercises are scarcely done, thus making students unable to know whether they are doing the right or wrong thing in composition writing.

The thirty-three (33) students who think students should be blamed have the following reasons to support their claim.

- ✓ Teachers do their best to teach composition writing but students do not make efforts to learn hard.
- ✓ Students do not read extra material to improve their vocabulary, grammar or acquire more ideas.
- ✓ There are no test books for students to use to supplement what is being taught on composition writing.

AVAILABILITY OF LEARNING MATERIALS

Q.7. Are there enough textbooks and other learning materials for composition writing available in the school or at home for students to use?

This was the last question for the students to respond to. It simple demanded a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Table eleven (11) is meant to illustrate the responses given.

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	28	38.4
NO	45	61.6
TOTAL	73	100

Table 11

Even though no reasons were demanded, some students squeezed in some reasons. Those who responded 'no' as can be seen from table 11 above, were the majority that is, 45 students representing 61.6%. They gave reasons like there are only a few old English textbooks which are not fully utilized because of the large number of students involved. They also

contend that there are no other materials available for them to use except what the teacher teaches.

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH RATING OF STUDENTS ESSAYS

Q 1. Which of the following would you say your students essays match with?

By this question the researcher's aim was to make teachers rate their students essay from 'poor' to 'very good'. That is to say, they should tell whether the students are able to produce reasonable essays or not. The table below shows the responses.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Poor	1	25
Average	2	50
Good	1	25
Very Good	0	0
TOTAL	4	100

Table 12

The result of the responses show that 2 teachers claim that many of their students produce averagely good essays, while one (1) each responded that students' are poor or good. In short, the responses show that there is a problem in the teaching and learning of composition writing.

FREQUENCY OF COMPOSITION LESSONS AND EXERCISES GIVEN BY TUTORS WITH REASONS

Q.2. (a) How often do you teach and give composition exercises.

(b) Give two major reasons for your answer in question 2a.

The respondents were expected to provide answers ranging from 'weekly' to 'termly': The researcher hoped that with the results, he will be able to determine how seriously composition writing is taken in the school and reasons for such an attitude. Table 13 illustrates the responses to two (2a).

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Weekly	0	0
Fortnightly	2	50
Monthly	1	25
Termly	1	25
TOTAL	4	100.0

Table 13

Two (2) teachers that is, 50% say that they give composition lessons and exercises fortnightly, one (1) teacher each claim that they do so monthly and termly respectively. However, no teacher is able to give essay lessons and exercises weekly.

For Q.2, (b) all the teachers gave the same reasons.

These are

- ✓ Large enrolment of students.
- ✓ They are engaged in teaching other subjects

The reasons given clearly illustrate that because of these large numbers of students enrolled in our schools without an equally adequate supply of English teachings affect the teaching of English, particularly, composition writing is seriously affected. This problem is further compounded by the

fact that these few English teachers are given other academic schedules to handle.

HOMEWORK

Q.3. Do you give your students homework on composition writing?

The rationale behind asking the question was for the researcher to further ascertain whether composition writing is given the needed attention.

The responses required in this question were 'Yes'; 'No' or 'Sometimes' as shown in the table 14 below.

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	3	75
No	0	0
Sometimes	1	25
TOTAL	4	100

Table 14

According to the responses given above three (3) teachings, representing seventy-five (75) percent claim they give homework, while one (1), that is twenty-five (25) percent sometimes give homework to his students. This positive attitude shows that teachers are conscious of the fact that homework is a very good way to supplement class work as far as composition writing is concerned.

REMEDIAL CLASSES

Q.4. Do you organize remedial classes when you notice that your students do not understand your composition lessons or when you miss normal classes?

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	1	25
NO	2	50
SOMETIMES	1	25
TOTAL	4	100

Table 15

The researcher asked this question for the purpose of finding out whether English teachers make any extra effort to motivate students to arouse their desire to write good compositions by way of remedial classes or not. As the results show in table 15 only one tutor claims he does not give remedial classes, and one sometimes does it. Two (2) of them about 50% do not give remedial classes at all.

REACTION OF STUDENTS TOWARDS REMEDIAL CLASS

Q.5. What is the reaction of students towards remedial classes?

The motive for presenting this question to the teachers is to find out whether students like or dislike the remedial classes or are passive towards them. The answers given by the respondents revealed that two (2) teachers assert that students' reaction is positive and another two (2) state that they are passive towards remedial classes. No one (0) responded that the reaction of students to remedial classes is negative. A summary of the results is shown in table 15 below.

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
POSITIVE	2	50
NAGATIVE	0	0
PASSIVE	2	50
TOTAL	4	100

Table 15

METHODS USED BY TEACHERS TO TEACH ESSAY WRITING

Q.6. What methods do you use most often to teach your students composition writing? Give only four of them.

This was an open ended question which requested respondents to react to it by writing down only four methods they use to teach composition writing.

The sole aim of the researcher for wanting to know these methods was to determine whether tutors use up-to-date methods to teach the topic or not. Surprisingly, whilst three (3) of the respondent mentioned the Lecture, Discussion, Activity and Group methods as the ones they use most often, the fourth one mentioned paragraphing, listing of key words on the black board, exposing students to main ideas and using model essays as his methods of teaching. This might probably be due to lack of understanding of the question or otherwise. It could also be due to complete ignorance of what methods are employed in teaching the topic.

ACTIVITIES INVOLVED WHEN TEACHING COMPOSITION

Q.7. Mention any three activities involved in the teaching of composition writing.

Responses to this question were to be put in the respondents own words, since no answer were supplied. The common responses supplied by all the four respondents included (i) use of dialogue, (ii) discussions and (iii) brainstorming. Though respondents got the track of the question, the researcher feels that two of the activities, that is, discussions and brainstorming seem to overlap.

AVAILABILITY OF TEACHING MATERIALS

Q.8. Are there enough textbooks and other materials for the teaching of composition writing in your school?

The responses are summarized in the following table

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	0	0
No	4	100
TOTAL	4	100

Table 17

As can be observe from table 17, all four respondents claim that there are no enough textbooks and other materials available in the school for the teaching of composition writing.

WHO TAKES BLAME FOR POOR COMPOSITION WRITING

Q.9. Who should be blamed for poor composition writing by students?

The responses to be indicated for this question were (a) students (b) English tutors (c) the system

This question got interesting responses, since no tutors wanted the blame to go to him or her. Apart from one who put the blame on tutors, two (2), representing fifty (50) percent felt the blame should go to the system. The remaining one (respondent) put the blame on the students. Below in the table 18 is the summary of the result:

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Students	1	25
Tutors	1	25
The System	2	50
TOTAL	4	100

Table 18

IN – SERVICE TEAINING

Q.10. Have you attended any form of In-Service Training organized for English Tutors of the SSS? If 'No' give one reason.

The idea behind this question was for the researcher to ascertain whether tutors at the SSS are given In-Service Training to update their teaching skills. It was also the aim of the researcher to find out whether the tutors attend these courses. The answer required were simply 'Yes' or 'No' and if 'No' the respondent were expected to give one reason to back it. Below in table 19 is the analysis of the result.

RESPONSESE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	1	25
No	3	75
TOTAL	4	100

Table 19

From the above table, it will be noticed that as many as three (3) tutors, that is seventy-five (75) percent have not attended any form of In-Service Training as English teachers, while only one (1), representing twenty-five (25) percent has even attended In-Service Training.

The reason the three (3) representing gave is that no In-Service Training course has been organized for tutors of English in the SSS since they began teaching in the school.

VIII. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher presented the questionnaires meant for students and analysed them with frequency tables supporting each question and its responses, The tutors questionnaires and responses have also been presented by the researcher. Below are the findings that emerged from the use of the questionnaire.

- ✓ Students recognize that composition writing help to broaden their knowledge, improve their writing skills and help them to perform better in other subjects.
- ✓ There are no enough composition lessons and exercises given them.
- ✓ Students make the effort to write their own essays for tutors to mark in order to help them correct their mistakes, but tutors react negatively towards this extra work given them.

- ✓ Students face problems such as (a) introducing and concluding essays, developing paragraphing , grammatical errors, etc.
- ✓ Students blame tutors for not teaching the topic (composition writing) well.
- ✓ Both students and teachers agree that there are no enough teaching and learning materials in the schools for teaching and learning composition writing.
- ✓ Teachers agree that students' performance in composition writing is average.
- ✓ Teachers are unable to do much in the teaching of essay writing because of large number of students enrolled into school they are also engaged in teaching other subjects.
- ✓ No remedial classes are given to students, though students have a great desire for them.
- ✓ Some teachers use wrong methods in teaching composition writing.
- ✓ No form of in-service training is given to English tutors in the Senior Secondary Schools (SSS)

IX. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDING, SUGGESTION RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and highlights conclusions drawn by the researcher. It also includes some suggestions or recommendations for the effective teaching of composition writing.

The revelations of the research instrument that is, the questionnaires for both teachers of English and the students of SSS One (1), show that there are five major problems facing both tutors of English and students of the SSS.

The most important finding the researcher came out with was insufficient supply of teaching and learning materials, especially, textbooks in most Senior Secondary Schools. This is supported by the fact that about 62.1% of the students and 60% of the English tutors of the school testify to it by the responses to the question on the problem. Such a problem makes the effective teaching and learning impossible.

Coupled with the inadequacies in the supply of materials is the fact that the few textbooks which are available for use in the school are collected at the end of each term, thus depriving students the opportunity to use these books at home. This is a clear indication that students cannot do any extra studies at home to supplement what they learn in school.

Closely related to the above problems are the methods used by some of the tutors of English. The findings further showed that some of the tutors who responded to the questionnaires could not state the methods they use to teach composition writing. These tutors mentioned, for example, (i) paragraphing and (ii) exposing students to main ideas, as the methods they use in teaching composition writing. This revelation could be attributed to fact that these tutors are not professional English tutors and therefore do not know the methods. It could also be that the question was misunderstood by these respondents.

Another serious finding that comes to light during the research was that, there is unsatisfactory teaching of the English Language, particularly, essay writing in the Senior Secondary Schools. Both lessons and exercises are highly

inadequate, hence, the students demand for daily exercises. One probable cause of this as 50% of the tutors testified in their responses, is the large enrolment of students (about 160-250) in each form. The other probable cause as mentioned is the fact they (tutors) are engaged in teaching other subjects apart from English Language.

X. SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings stated above, the researcher would like to offer some suggestions or recommendations that would go a long way to improve the teaching of English and Language and for that matter, composition writing in the senior secondary school (SSS). These include:

- ✓ The provision of enough teaching and learning materials, particularly, textbooks, by the government, through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) for effective teaching and learning of the English Language. The Parent –Teachers Associations could also help in this.
- ✓ The organization of frequent (termly) in service training for all categories of tutors of English to update their knowledge on current approaches to the teaching of composition writing. Such methods as snowballing, Brainstorming, Role playing, Demonstration, Field Trips. The Question and Answer, Group and Activity methods can be introduced to teachers of English so that they will use them to effectively teach composition writing.
- ✓ The training and posting of professional English tutors to Senior High Schools to meet the ever increasing number of students admitted into the Senior Secondary Schools. Tutors who are already in the field should be made to teach only English so that they can give out their maximum in teaching the subject, particularly, composition writing.
- ✓ The improvisation of teaching and learning aids by tutors of English, instead of relying solely on the government for every teaching materials they need. English tutors should also consider it a professional and academic duty to organize remedial classes for the lost periods and slow learners in the schools.
- ✓ Students on their part should co-operate with their tutors by attending classes and writing composition assignments given to them regularly. They should also stop destroying and pilfering with the few available teaching and learning materials in schools. Students should endeavor to do extensive reading on their own to upgrade their

knowledge of ideas and to acquire new vocabulary which is very essential for good composition writing.

XI. CONCLUSION

The researcher wishes to conclude by stating that the suggestions given above are only a representation of several other ways of making the teaching of composition writing in our Senior Secondary Schools effectively. All persons or groups of persons who see the falling standards of SSS students in the English Language, particularly, composition writing, as a matter of concern, should empty the given suggestions in addition to their own to bring about improvement in these falling standards.

The researcher further recommends that further study be made into the topic, since everything of it cannot be exhausted in this study.

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