The Status Of Teacher Planning And Its Influence On Kiswahili Language Composition Instruction In Secondary Schools In Kenya

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Abstract: Kiswahili is one of the compulsory subjects in the 8-4-4 curriculum at both primary and secondary schools in Kenya. At secondary school level, it comprises of three papers: Composition writing, Language use and Literature. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the status of teacher planning in Kiswahili language composition and its influence on instruction. The study was guided by Vygotsky's theory (1978) whose two principles – More Knowledgeable Other and Zone of Proximal Development relates to the difference between what a child can achieve alone and with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner. The study was a descriptive survey since it was set to discover and interpret existing conditions focusing on 15 secondary schools sampled from 45 schools with a total approximately 2000 students. The sampling methods used included stratified, purposive and simple random sampling methods. Questionnaires were administered to 150 students while 15 lessons were observed. An interview schedule was used to collect verbal information from teachers. Document analysis of schemes of work was also done. Analyzed data was presented using frequency tables and percentages. The research found out that preparation for Kiswahili language composition lessons was wanting. The study recommended that teachers of Kiswahili be encouraged to prepare lesson plans and notes. It is hoped that these findings will guide Kiswahili language educators, teacher trainers, curriculum designers and the Kenya National Examinations Council in re-examining their views on composition writing skills. Suggestions and recommendations in this study will be potentially significant for teachers of Kiswahili in that they may indicate changes of teaching behavior that would lead to more desirable classroom outcomes.

Keywords: Kiswahili language composition, planning, Kiswahili language, instruction, writing skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

In any country, education plays a vital role in the development and attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs main aim is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. The SDGs focus on three areas of human development: bolstering human capital, improving infrastructure and increasing social, economic and political rights. Within the human capital focus, education is the key driver. Teachers are an important component of education whose services are important in the realization of educational goals the world over. Due to their central role in the enterprise of education, teachers at all levels require effective and sufficient education and training to be able to adequately carry out their teaching roles and responsibilities. If learners are equipped with communication skills in Kiswahili this can go a long way in being instrumental towards enabling Kenya develop private and development assistance and expansion of market access as Kiswahili is the most commonly used language in Kenya and in East Africa in general.

In line with this the Kenya Vision 2030, the long-term development blueprint for the country articulates the appropriate national goals to meet peoples' aspirations motivated by collective aspiration for a better society (Daily Nation May 17, I2012). In a world that is becoming more dependent on information, communication and technology (with language being a central factor) its skilled and proficient use is a key factor in economic and social opportunities (Mogambi, 2011). Teachers are thus an important component

of education whose services are important in the realization of educational goals the world over. Therefore, in order to participate fully in the realization of the country's vision, the secondary school curriculum should embark on a comprehensive path towards imparting improved writing skills in a language readily understood and that language is Kiswahili. The writing skill has been singled out as one of the most important language skill. This is because all examinations require writing. The writing skill is in itself a process that begins at kindergarten through tertiary institutions and beyond. The secondary school Kiswahili syllabus postulates that fluency in all aspects of Kiswahili language will enable students to perform better in the other two papers whose mode of presentation for examination is writing (Onsare, 2011). The need to raise the standard of Kiswahili language composition is therefore very urgent as the learning and teaching process of the other two papers depends very much on this skill. A student whose standard of Kiswahili language composition is very low cannot excel in the other papers because he can neither express his ideas nor respond to examinations questions effectively. Therefore, this study sought to investigate how planning by teachers impact on their teaching of Kiswahili language composition.

A. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the school system writing is an important skill that not only helps learners in performing well in Kiswahili language composition but also enhances their performance in the other two papers (102/2; 102/3) which require that the learner express him/herself in writing. Many teachers of Kiswahili have concentrated on content delivery and seldom do they concentrate on the teaching and learning tasks that enable learners to acquire various language skills (Murunga, 2013). According to KNEC, KCSE examination report (2016), performance in Kiswahili has been poor with the standard of the candidates' work going down. Since Kiswahili is a compulsory subject this negatively impacts on the overall grade of the candidate. Kiswahili language composition accounts for 40% of the total marks one is awarded in Kiswahili KCSE exam. Table 1 shows performance in paper 102/1(Kiswahili language composition) between 2009 and 2016.

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Average mark	15.40	14.32	16.43	10.43	18.46	20.17	20.86	18.23
Deviation	6.93	6.53	5.61	3.63	5.44	5.26	5.19	5.53
Number of candidates	335,377	354,738	410,807	*433,886*	445,555	482,122	521,159	571,176

Source: KNEC KCSE Results Report, 2016
Table 1: KCSE results analysis

From this and other reports, it is noted that in 2012,
- ✓ The average mark in Kiswahili language composition (Paper 102/1) dropped from 16.43 in 2011 to 10.43 in 2012.
- ✓ The highest score in this paper was 35/40 in this year. Only one candidate got this score.
- ✓ Majority of candidates scored below half (20/40) in this paper.

The highest number of candidates scored 08/40. These were 81121 (18.7%) while 65, 464 (15%) scored 07/40. This

means that more than a third of all candidates scored between 7 and 8 which is less than a quarter of the highest possible. This poor performance has persisted despite some improvement in later years particularly 2014 and 2015. The downward trend again is seen in 2016. This poor performance in Paper 1 is important as it gives one reason why performance in Paper 2 and 3 is not satisfactory though not as bad as of Kiswahili language composition Paper. It is important to note that poor performance in this paper implies that students do not express themselves well in writing. Since the two other papers 102/2 – Lugha (Kiswahili language) and 102/3 – Fasihi (Literature) require learners' proficiency in writing, it then follows that such students will find it difficult to perform well in these two papers as well. This report recommends that teachers diligently guide their learners according to the requirements of the syllabus. It also recommends that teachers give many compositions writing exercises particularly functional writing. Even with spelling mistakes being overlooked in Paper 103, the general performance of Kiswahili subject has remained rather poor. This gap between lack of a focused and systematic approach to teaching writing skills and poor performance of Kiswahili language composition and Kiswahili in general in secondary school national examinations in Kenya is the starting point for this study.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research sought to establish how various teaching activities affect the learning of Kiswahili language composition in secondary schools in Kenya. Since teaching plays a very important role in determining performance of learners, this study is going to offer necessary guidance on what teachers ought to do to improve in their teaching.

The research findings will also be beneficial to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development which produces and provides guidance on instructional materials for teaching Kiswahili in schools. Through seminars and workshops, it will be able to identify, judge and select suitable textbooks for use by teachers of Kiswahili in order to equip themselves with pedagogical skills to improve their teaching of Kiswahili language composition writing. The Kenya Vision 2030 asserts that Kenya will provide a globally competitive quality education, training and research for development. The major aim of the government is to increase access to education, improve the transition rate from secondary to tertiary institutions, as well as raise the relevance of basic education as well as integrate special needs of education in all learning and training institutions. Other objectives of vision 2030 include the need to achieve 80% adult literacy rate, increase the net enrolment rate to 95% in basic education and increase the transition rate to technical institutions from 3% to 8% . In order to realize these goals, the education system in Kenya should produce pupils who can be able to express themselves clearly and logically through writing.

C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on Vygotskys' Theory (1978) which is a socio-cultural approach to cognitive development. This

theory places more emphasis on culture affecting/shaping cognitive development. Vygotsky assumes cognitive development varies across cultures. He places considerably more emphasis on social factors contributing to cognitive development. Vygotsky states that cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children and their partners co-construct knowledge. The environment in which children grow up will influence how they think and what they think about. Vygotsky claimed that infants are born with the basic abilities for intellectual development and through interaction within the socio-cultural environment; these are developed into more sophisticated and effective mental process which he refers to as Higher Mental Functions.

One of the elements of Vygotsky's Theory is Social Influence on Cognitive Development. Vygotsky believes that young children are curious and actively involved in their own learning and the discovery and development of new understandings/schema. However, Vygotsky placed more emphasis on social constructions to the process of development. According to him, much learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a skilled tutor. The tutor may model behaviors and/or provide verbal instructions for the child. Vygotsky refers to this as cooperative or collaborative dialogue. The child seeks to understand the actions or an instruction provided by the tutor (often the parent or teacher) then internalizes the information, using it to guide or regulate their performance. Shaffer (1996) gives the example of a young girl who is given her first jigsaw. Alone, she performs poorly in attempting to solve the puzzle. The father then sits with her and describes or demonstrates some basic strategies, such as finding all the corner/edge pieces for the child to put together herself and offers encouragement when she does so. As the child becomes more competent the father allows the child to work more independently. According to Vygotsky, this type of social interaction involving cooperative and collaborative dialogue promotes cognitive development. The teacher of Kiswahili can facilitate learning of Kiswahili language composition writing through various activities including regular supervision and marking of students' work. The teacher offers guidance and reinforcement until such a point where the student can comfortably write good essays. The frequency and the kind of feedback given to students have a significant impact on subsequent performance of the learners.

Another element of Vygotsky's Theory is referred to as More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). This refers to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process or concept. This is the person in an educational setting who facilitates and guides students through the learning process. The key to MKOs is that they must have more knowledge about the topic being learned than the learner does. The teacher of Kiswahili guides students on how to write good essays and this interaction leads to improvement on the part of students. Through constant interaction with the teacher, it is expected that the learner will be able to acquire knowledge and skills in the writing of good essays.

Teachers' knowledge and skills is a very important component in the dissemination of their day to day duties. For a teacher to effectively teach Kiswahili language composition writing, they should have the knowledge of content and the required skill so as to impact positively in the life of the learners. The major setback in teaching as a profession is the problem of inadequacy of teachers' knowledge and skills. This is not limited to teachers of Kiswahili who teach Kiswahili language composition writing skills.

The concept of the More Knowledgeable Other is integrally related to another principle of Vygotsky's work, The Zone of Proximal Development. This is an important concept that relates to the difference between what a child can achieve independently and what a child can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner. Vygotsky (1978) sees the Zone of Proximal Development as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given-allowing the child to develop skills they will then use on their own-developing higher mental functions. An experiment that seeks to prove this principle was conducted by Freud (1990) who conducted a study in which children had to decide which items of furniture should be placed in particular areas of a doll's house. Some children were allowed to play with their mother in a similar situation before they attempted it alone (zone of proximal development) while others were allowed to work on this by themselves. Freud found that those who had previously worked with their mother (ZPD), showed greater improvement compared with their first attempt at the task. The conclusion being that guided learning with the ZPD led to greater understanding/performance than working alone (discovery learning). This presupposes the vital role played by the teacher to enable learners write good essays cannot be overlooked. Writing skill of the learner can be enhanced through working closely with the teacher.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some teachers do not complete detailed schemes of work and lesson plans and then wonder why students do not learn. Although years of experience can shore up less-than-complete planning, nothing compares to well-planned lessons. Comprehensive schemes and plans increase the likelihood that lessons run smoothly, so that students receive quality instruction.

According to Murunga (2013), instructional process comprises three basic steps. The first is planning instruction which includes identifying specific expectations of learning outcomes, selecting materials to foster these expectations of outcomes and the second step involves delivering the planned instruction to learners- that is; teaching them. The third step involves assessing how well students learn or achieve the expectations of outcomes. As the lesson is taught, the teacher pays close attention to how well students understand key concepts so she can later write notes in her lesson plan book to inform future lessons. Every detail, from the minutes necessary for each phase to notes concerning the best questions for student response, provides insight for the next lesson.

Several scholars have suggested considerations that need to be made in preparing and delivering a Kiswahili language composition lesson. These efforts should also take into

account the selection of relevant teaching resources and Kiswahili language composition writing tasks given to learners during and after the lesson. Freedman (2010) suggests that instruction in writing should take into account careful selection of topics to be taught, methods of giving writing assignments, selection of materials to use in teaching writing and criteria for judging a good composition. According to him, a good composition should present information according to rules of grammar, spelling and punctuation, communicate fluently, have aesthetic value and cognitive content. All these require proper planning on the part of the teacher if teaching is to be successful. However, many teachers consider language composition as homework and only give a few instructions such as the length of the composition expected (Freedman, 2010). He further suggests that composition writing is a skill that is distinct from the other language skills with its own complexities that can be resolved by using special methods. It is a technical skill that cannot be acquired by chance or by some innate ability but has to be taught. This teaching requires proper planning of what instructional methods to adopt, materials to use, assessment activities and so on. In teaching language composition writing, Freedman (2010) and Awino (2011) suggest that teachers must prepare adequately, have a purpose of writing, provide the right help to learners and guide them during the writing process.

The transformation of subject matter for teaching Kiswahili language composition writing, occurs as the teacher critically reflects on and interprets the subject matter, finds multiple ways to represent the information as analogies, metaphors, examples, problems, demonstrations and classroom activities; adapts the material to students' abilities, gender, prior knowledge, and preconceptions (those pre-instructional informal, or non-traditional ideas students bring to the learning setting); and finally tailors the material to those specific students to whom the information will be taught (Mwangi,2011).

For any successful instructional process the following should be put in place.

✓ Intentional and proactive ways to address the established goals and the assessment plan.
✓ Establish a plan for how instructional materials and strategies will be used to support learner understanding.

In this study the researcher was mainly concerned with how teachers of Kiswahili language align these basic steps with one another in a way that the planned instruction should be logically related to the actual instruction and how this influences how learners of Kiswahili language acquire writing skills. This calls for teachers to come up with a systematic approach to teaching that requires a careful selection of materials, tasks and procedures at all levels of learning. For successful teaching to take place there is need on the part of the teacher to consider all the variables in play.

Rodgers (2007) advises that in teaching languages the teachers must consider the objectives, syllabus specification, types of activities and roles of teachers, learners and materials among others during the preparation process and the process of learning. In order to achieve this, then the teachers and the learners of Kiswahili should be able to utilize all the writing skills in order to achieve the set objectives. This study assumed that adequate knowledge in methodology placed the

teachers of Kiswahili in a better position to conduct lessons aimed at developing various writing skills.

Borg (2003) observes that poorly educated teachers can teach only what they know, and that as a result, they cling to the textbooks and depend on the narrow framework of the system to give them their sense of security. These when in doubt always fall back onto ways in which they were taught several years back. Teacher preparation is therefore one of the keys to better instructional approaches and techniques which embrace innovation and change both in education and the society.

Taylor and Richards in Barasa (2005) see "the skill and experience of the teacher" as the fulcrum of the process of the curriculum. They argue further that the teacher's perception of what was intended by the curriculum developers and teacher's ability to shape his teaching so as to facilitate the achievement of their interventions add to the realization of the objectives and aims of the curriculum. Farrant (2002) explains that efficient learning depends on well-chosen and managed activities suggesting that activities should never be regarded as an end in themselves for it is possible to be very active and yet learn nothing. A good teacher will always give activity as a means to an end and select with care the activities he uses so that they serve best the process of learning. This assertion stresses the fact that task-based activities are essential in learning of language skills. Therefore teachers of Kiswahili should integrate and plan for their utilization within their lessons.

Teachers of Kiswahili language should also plan teaching/learning activities which can be contextualized to bring enjoyment to the exercise. This can be done through a variety of instructional activities. This is why Ministry of education in Kenya (2002) syllabus advocate for learner – centered approaches to teaching- learning with multiple teaching strategies to suit the topic and objectives intended to be achieved. According to Assey and Ayot (2009), the extent to which learners master a skill /concept depends on the way it is presented to them. This view is supported by Bennars et al (1994) who explain that the way teachers plan and teach contributes greatly to the extent of learning attained.

Richards, (2008) elaborate that in "preparing for teaching" planning is the only sure way to ensure educational objectives are achieved. The effects of teaching and assessment on students' learning should also be considered while planning. Preparation according to Richards (ibid) also entails writing schemes of work and preparation of lesson plans. This view is supported by Murunga (2013) who asserts that planning is an important step in teaching. A teacher who plans communicates effectively, logically and presents the right content and ends teaching well in time (Assey & Ayot, 2009).

III. METHODS

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and a mixed methods research approach. Data was collected from teachers and students drawn from 15 secondary schools. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling were used to obtain a sample of 150 Form three students and 15 teachers of

Kiswahili language. This study utilized students' questionnaires, interviews for teachers, lesson observations and document analysis on students' Kiswahili language composition notebooks for data collection. The research instruments used aimed at establishing teacher planning in Kiswahili language compositions and types of feedback provided by the teacher ok Kiswahili. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to find out the in Kiswahili language find out the status of teacher planning in Kiswahili language composition and how it influenced its instruction. The findings were obtained from students' questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis for students' notebooks.

Students' questionnaire had eight items measuring teacher planning that the students were to respond to.

The results are as shown in Table 4.3.

Statement	SD		D		U		A		SA		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The Kiswahili composition lesson caters for all the different needs of the students	54	36.0	83	55.3	0	0	10	6.7	3	2.0	150	100.0
In my school we always have lessons set aside for Kiswahili composition	52	34.7	78	52.0	6	4.0	13	8.7	1	.7	150	100.0
The content of Kiswahili composition lesson reflects how we are examined	58	38.7	57	38.0	11	7.3	19	12.7	5	3.3	150	100.0
The teacher presents the content at a good pace to enable all of us understand the concepts taught	73	48.7	52	34.7	10	6.7	8	5.3	7	4.7	150	100.0
My teachers always give us notes for Kiswahili composition	55	36.7	58	38.7	8	5.3	21	14.0	8	5.3	150	100.0
The teacher always tells us the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson	59	39.3	56	37.3	20	13.3	12	8.0	3	2.0	150	100.0
The teacher allows the students to participate during the Kiswahili composition lesson	33	22.0	56	37.3	32	21.3	23	15.3	6	4.0	150	100.0
The teacher starts a lesson from what we know	49	32.7	58	38.7	14	9.3	21	14.0	8	5.3	150	100.0

Table 4.1: Teacher Planning for Kiswahili Composition Instruction

Data from interview schedule indicated most teachers had schemed for Kiswahili language composition lessons. However, only one teacher had a lesson plan. According to Murunga 2013, instructional process must begin with planning which includes identifying specific expectations of learning outcomes and selecting materials to foster these expectations and outcomes. This could explain why many teachers seem to lack a concrete method of teaching Kiswahili language composition as planning for the lessons is neglected.

Whereas many teachers had schemes of work, only a few consulted them during the lesson. It was further observed that very few teachers were teaching the content schemed for with some ahead of the schemes of work while others lagged behind the schemes of work. Teachers relied on class-texts, teachers' guides, revision books and memory to deliver their Kiswahili language composition lessons. This led to use of inappropriate methods and resources. The resources used were few and wrongly used. It was noted that Kiswahili language composition tasks given to learners were inadequate. The tasks and exercises given to develop Kiswahili language composition skills were irrelevant and teacher-centered. The Kiswahili language composition tasks given recorded a poor performance. This poor performance would be attributed to teacher-centered strategies employed by Kiswahili language composition teachers as observed in actual Kiswahili language composition lessons. Further, from these observations, there were indications that teachers did not strictly adhere to scheme of work. Lack of lesson notes was a pointer to unpreparedness on the part of the teacher.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings revealed that the teachers of Kiswahili did not adequately prepare in Kiswahili language composition instruction in secondary schools where the study was done. Due to this, the Kiswahili language composition lesson did not cater for all the different needs of the students. It was also found that in most schools, there were no lessons set aside for Kiswahili composition. The teachers were not able to present the Kiswahili language composition lessons at a good pace and they did not always give students notes for Kiswahili composition. The study also established that student participation in Kiswahili language composition was low.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that teachers of Kiswahili should be encouraged to prepare lesson plans and lesson notes for Kiswahili language composition lessons. This will improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Internal school inspection mechanisms should be established on teacher preparation for Kiswahili composition.

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