

**PRE-PLANNING FOR ESSAY WRITING AND THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS  
LOCATED IN RUBAGA DIVISION, KAMPALA DISTRICT,  
UGANDA**

**By**

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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO COLLEGE OF  
EDUCATION OPEN, DISTANCE AND E- LEARNING AS  
A PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD  
OF THE DEGREE OF A BACHELOR OF  
EDUCATION ARTS OF KAMPALA  
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY:**

**MAY 2019**

## **Kampala International University**

Research Title: Pre-Planning for Essay Writing and the Improvement of Students' Writing Skills in Secondary Schools Allocated in Rubaga Division, Kampala District - Uganda

Subject: A Research Report

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## DECLARATION

I Kiyimba T.\* Elias hereby declare that this is my original work. That it has never been submitted to any university or institution of higher learning for any academic award.

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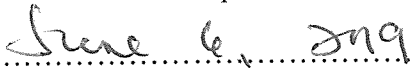
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research study has been tiresome. For this reason, a number of people are hereby acknowledged.

It is my pleasure to see that The Almighty God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit has helped and granted to me the knowledge and the strength to write this report. I pray in order for Him to accept my thanks and to beseech Him again to bless and inspire me in my future responsibilities.

To individuals, my first acknowledgement goes to my supervisor, Dr. Sofia Gaite who constantly advised me about writing this report. I also thank her for her supervision effort she invested in me while writing this dissertation. Such incentives gave me courage to write it and eventually, I came up with this presentation.

I am also grateful to the Head of Department M/s Gwokyalya Edith who devoted her time guiding me all the time and her guidance helped me to endure and finally wrote this dissertation with courage.

Another acknowledgement goes to Dr. Gulele C. but especially to Dr. Kalema who with much love gave me suggestions about the title question of the report. Their suggestions and correction about the title of the report made this report to be well written.

I also thank to the entire department of Education of Kampala International University especially the lecturers who devoted their time teaching me all knowledge that enabled me to come to writing this report. More so, I thank M/s Iroot Irene and M/s Irupia Christine who also gave me a good advice of conducting the research which led to composing this research report. All of them really opened up my eye for future prospects.

My recognition also goes to my Orthodox Church Leaders and members who have helped and supported me in various ways. More so, much thanks goes to Chwa II Memorial College Administration who offered photocopying whenever need was and printing this report.

Another extreme acknowledgement goes to my mother Papazia Ann Kiyimba , my family members and friends both natives and foreigners who have supported me financially in order to accomplish this report.

I am also grateful to the Head teachers and especially the Directors of Studies of the selected schools where the research study was conducted. They really did

much in organizing the respondents to write the information needed for the study.

Lastly, my acknowledgement goes to my classmates whom I struggled with, and also to my colleagues who shared with me many ideas about this work. Really, it was a great contribution.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Contents

DECLARATION .....	i
APPROVAL .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLE.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
 CHAPTER ONE.....	 1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.1.1 Historical Perspective .....	1
1.1.2 Theoretical Perspective.....	2
1.1.3 Conceptual Perspective.....	2
1.1.5 Contextual Perspective .....	4
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3. Purpose of the Study .....	5
1.4. Specific Objectives .....	5
1.5 Research objectives.....	5
1.6 Hypothesis .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.7 Scope of the Study .....	6
1.7.1 Geographical scope.....	6
1.7.2 Content Scope .....	6
1.7.3 Theoretical Scope.....	6
1.7.4 Time Scope .....	6
1.8 Significance of the Study.....	7

<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.0. Introduction.....	8
2.1 Theoretical Review .....	9
2.1.2. Pre-writing .....	9
2.1.3 Stage of articulation/ Production of test .....	9
2.1.4 Post writing .....	10
2.1.5 Implicit theory.....	10
2.1.6 Malleable theory .....	10
2.2 Conceptual Framework.....	11
2.3 Related Studies .....	13
2.3.1 Pre-planning for essay writing.....	13
2.3.2 Improvement of students' writing skills. ....	15
2.3.3 The relationship between pre-planning and improvement of students' writing skills.....	17
2.4 Gaps Identified.....	18
2.5 Objective .....	18
2.6 Use of pre-planning for essay writing.....	18
2.6.1 Sentence structure and function .....	19
2.6.2 Nature of paragraphing .....	19
2.6.3 Essay .....	19
2.6.3.1 Introduction.....	20
2.6.3.2 The body .....	20
2.6.3.3 Conclusion .....	20
2.7 Limitations .....	21
2.7.1 Frustration .....	21
2.7.2 Lack of knowledge about writing .....	21
2.7.3 Environments .....	21
2.7.4 Poverty .....	22

<b>CHAPTER THREE.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Research Design.....	23
3.2 Target population.....	23
3.3 Sample size .....	23
3.4 Sampling Procedure.....	24
3.5 Research Instruments .....	24
3.6 Validity and reliability of the Research Instrument.....	24
... 3.5.1 Validity of Instruments.....	25
3.5.2 Reliability of Instruments.....	25
3.7 Data Collection Procedure.....	26
3.8 Data Analysis.....	26
3.9 Ethical Considerations.....	26
3.10 Limitations of the Study.....	27
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	 <b>29</b>
<b>PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA.....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1. Introduction.....	29
4.1 General Information on Respondents.....	31
4.2. Pre-planning .....	32
4.2.1 Paragraph Structure .....	34
4.2.2 Composition (Essay) Structure.....	36
4.2.3 Interview.....	37
4.2.4 Findings through Observation.....	40
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	 <b>41</b>
<b>DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION .....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.0 Introduction .....	41
5.1 Discussions.....	41
5.2 Conclusions.....	44
5.3 Recommendations.....	45

5.4 Area for Further Research.....	46
References.....	47
APPENDICES .....	50
Appendix I.....	49
Questionnaire .....	50
APPENDIX II.....	53
Interview questions .....	53
Oral Questions .....	53

## LIST OF TABLE

Table 4.1	Showing the distribution of questionnaires.....	30
Table 4.2	Showing questionnaires' returned.....	31
Table 4.3	Showing pre-planning for composition (essay) writing.....	33
Table 4.4	Showing paragraph structure.....	35
Table 4.5	Showing essay (composition) structure.....	36
Table 4.6	Showing interview feedback.....	38

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Diagram showing independent, dependent and intervening variables .....	11
Figure 2	Diagram showing cluster arrangement .....	14
Figure 3	Diagram showing Brainstorming/listing of points	15
Figure 4	A graph showing questionnaires distribution.....	30
Figure 5	A pie chart for the return of questionnaires.....	31
Figure 6	A graph for pre-planning for composition (essay) writing...	33
Figure 7	A pie chart showing interview feedback.....	38

## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between pre-planning for essay writing and the improvement of students' writing skills in Secondary Schools in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda. The study was guided by the following objectives; to determine the students' knowledge in pre-planning for essay (composition) writing, to find out the improvement of students' writing skills; and is there a relationship between pre-planning for essay and improvement of students writing skills. The study employed descriptive design. Questionnaires, interview guide and observations which were instruments used to gather data from 300 respondents from the three secondary schools. Percentage was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that pre-planning for essay writing is practiced inadequately. The essay writing skills of students was insignificantly weak as the majority of respondents did not know the skills of writing a standard essay. There is a relationship between pre-planning and improvement of students writing skills. Based on the findings it was concluded that respondents whose essays or compositions were identified as best were written by first making a plan for such as listing points. The following are the recommendations and they include: teaching the methods of planning for a composition or essay writing right from primary level, to reinforce pre-planning to the students, teachers to avoid the bad attitude of not wanting to teach skills of writing, use of incentives and to encourage library use and students sharing of knowledge with their colleagues..

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose, specific objectives, research questions, hypothesis, scope and the significant of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The background of the study presents the historical, theoretical, conceptual, contextual perspective.

#### **1.1.1 Historical Perspective**

English writing was introduced to Uganda by the colonial rule (Olla Cosmas, 1994). Students of that time did not develop a writing culture in terms of writing skills because it was their second and pure foreign language. From that time, pre-planning for essay writing has hardly been developed and still is hardly known to most of students especially of the three selected secondary schools that represent the selected population in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda.

It is a great significance for students of secondary level to understand the relevance of pre-planning for essay writing for better development or improvement of their writing skills. The best channel to achieve this is by mastering pre-planning, sentence structure, paragraph construction and essay

(composition) structure (Laurie Blass & Meredith Pike 2002, & Anker, Susan). which includes; the introduction, the body and the conclusion.

These are the essential channel that the research study intended to study for the better improvement of students' writing skills in the three selected secondary schools in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda.

### **1.1.2 Theoretical Perspective**

The theories such as pre-writing theory (Gebhardt, Richard 1982), stage of articulation or production of test theory (ibid), post writing theory (ibid), implicit theory (Yves Karlen & Miriam Compagnoni 2016), and malleable theory (ibid) were established and used in order to find out the relationship between pre-planning and writing skills. Pre-writing focuses on thinking, planning and organizing the language; stage of articulation explains how ideas are put on paper; post writing theory emphasizes students' evaluation and revision of their writing; implicit theory enhances students to interpret, believe and be motivated with pre-planning, and malleable theory concentrate on plan initiation and evaluation of writing process.

### **1.1.3 Conceptual Perspective**

Pre-planning is the clustering (mapping) and brainstorming (Kirsznner, Laurie G. & Mandell, Steven R, 2003) of points on a piece of paper in words or phrases before starting to write an essay or composition. On the other hand, writing skills are the techniques of writing while indicating the problem. Planning for any

writing is very crucial because it enables the writer to organize the theme and ideas in an essay or composition.

From global point of view, it is assumed that there are many people who have acquired education but still lacking essay (composition) skills of writing. One of the factors that cause this to become a world problem is, most of them never took it as a serious matter a writer to first make a pre-planning for composition or essay writing, and others never been taught in order to write effectively (Mogahed 2000). Since pre-planning for essay writing is essential to students' writing skills, therefore, it has to be emphasized for improvement of writing skills. Pre-planning is the way a writer or student lists points to write about or is a general plan for writing an essay. Improvement is the act of making something better. It is the process of something becoming better, or it is a change in something that makes it better than it was or has been before.

The writing skills are the techniques of writing that indicate the problem. It is the ability to convert thoughts into words with proper standards of English and punctuation, grammar and other important aspects of writing. In other terms, writing skills refer to narrative, expository, argumentative or persuasive and descriptive writing. A paragraph is a series of sentences that explain an idea or a point (Hornby, A. S. 2001). Usually, a paragraph has a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a clincher sentence all written as one block (Lynne Gaetz & Suneeti Phadke 2006). An essay is the same as a composition in terms of academic writing which has a series of paragraphs written as various blocks and each one explains one single idea or point. The paragraphs in an essay are

presented in stages or steps such as introduction, the body and the conclusion (Lee Odell, Richard Vacca, and Renee Hobbs, 2004).

#### **1.1.5 Contextual Perspective**

At national level, many students of secondary schools fail National Examinations of the English language just because they do not have and never acquired ways of how to plan for writing an essay (a composition) effectively. Hence, the students have less experience and inadequate skills of improving the essay (composition) writing. Basing on the problem stated above, it is a great significance for students of secondary level to understand the relevance of pre-planning for essay writing for better development of writing skills.

As already stated above, the best approach to attain this is by skillfully studying pre-planning, sentence structure (that requires grammatical rule, punctuation and spellings), paragraph construction (as an essay or composition cannot be good unless a paragraph is well constructed) and essay (composition) structure which includes; the introduction, the body and the conclusion. These were the crucial path that this research study proposed to study for the better improvement of students' writing skills, conducted in three selected secondary schools found in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda.

#### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Much as English is a language of instruction in Uganda, most of students here have the problem of writing skills. According to Mwesigwa, Alon (2014) there are several graduates who are unemployed just because they lack skills of writing such as letter writing like application letter. It has also led and leads to students

not to pass the National Examination because writing English is a great problem to them.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

The study investigated the relationship between pre-planning for essay writing and improvement of the students' writing skills in Secondary Schools in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda.

### **1.4. Specific Objectives**

The study sought to answer the following questions

1. To determine the students' knowledge about pre-planning for composition (essay) writing.
2. To find out the level of improvement of students' writing skills.
3. To establish the relationship between pre-planning for essay writing and improvement of students' writing skills.

### **1.5 Research objectives**

- 2 What is the pre-planning for essay (composition) writing?
- 3 What is the improvement of students' writing skills?
- 4 Is there a relationship between pre-planning for essay and improvement of students' writing skills?

### **1.6 Hypothesis**

There was no relationship between pre-planning for essay writing and improvement of students' writing skills.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study included: geographical scope, content scope, theoretical scope and time scope as they are explained below.

#### **1.7.1 Geographical scope**

The study was carried out in three places called Namungoona Parents Senior Secondary School, Chwa II Memorial College and Namungoona High School which are found at Namungoona six kilometres (6km) on Hoima Road in the Northwest of Kampala. They are located in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda (see the appendix for the map page 47-49).

#### **1.7.2 Content Scope**

The study focused on the pre-planning for essay writing and improvement of students' writing skills.

#### **1.7.3 Theoretical Scope**

The theories underpinned that the study were pre-writing theory, stage of articulation or production of text theory, post writing theory, implicit theory, and malleable theory.

#### **1.7.4 Time Scope**

The study was conducted from February, 2019 to May 2019.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study will be beneficial to the following stakeholders:

The school administrators can use the findings of the study as baseline information on how writing skills will be taught. It will help them hire qualified teachers to teach writing skills as well as English subjects in general. The teachers can use the findings to improve themselves on how to teach writing skills. The students both ordinary and advanced levels as well as the higher institutions can utilize the findings to improve their writing skills. The future researchers can utilize it as one of the additional documents to the existing materials for future reference. Therefore, searching and researching, reading and photocopying from it, can be some of the significant ways of how this research report can be used.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0. Introduction

Literature review provided an overview about the research study and introduced the framework that comprised the main focus of the research described in this research study (<https://litreview.ch.2/introd.2013>). The main purpose of literature review was to investigate the previous studies on pre-planning for essay writing and improvement of writing skills in order to support the primary data.

The appreciation of the work of the previous scholars, also contributed to two purposes. First, it provided the direction in the construction of the data collection instruments. Second, it provided some data that was used to describe, narrate, explain, analyze and prove the hypothesis of the research study (ibid). Several scholars among others were quoted and used to disclose some of the ideas about the study.

Basing on the scholars chosen, this chapter of literature review focused on how students can improve their writing skills and become better writers of an essay (a composition). This showed how pre-planning is used to acquire skills of writing; and the theories below are added on for the achievement of the objectives of the study.

## **2.1 Theoretical Review**

The theories that were underpinned for the study were: pre-writing, stage of articulation or production of test, post writing, implicit theory, and malleable theory as explained below.

A theory was needed to determine the principles followed or based on to explain a subject. It is defined as a formal set of ideas or principles that are intended to explain why something happens or exists. Or a theory predicts events in a broad, general content and it is extremely regarded as a tested and is accepted by the scholars ([url:https://.... libguides: Research Aims...19/11/2018](https://....libguides:ResearchAims...19/11/2018)). The following were some of the theories that explained pre-planning and writing skills. The first three theories were propounded by Gebhardt, Richard C. as seen below.

### **2.1.2. Pre-writing**

According to Gebhardt, Richard C. (1982), pre-writing stage is part of the theories that deals with all the preparatory efforts with the intention to write with conscious, to write from thinking, planning before beginning to write, organizing and associating thoughts with language. It also includes considerable mental relaxation and freedom from conscious thoughts on the problem. What this theory deal with and emphasizes is very vital for the improvement of writing skills among the learners.

### **2.1.3 Stage of articulation/ Production of test**

Stage of articulation or production of test concentrates on the writer working and putting thoughts on paper. It is a complex psychological process because it involves various acts such as making a start, finding the tone, establishing and

developing a topic, to mention a few. This also is put forward because it mentions the factors such as putting thoughts on paper, a start, a tone, and establishing and developing a topic. These factors are significant terms that can motivate the learner; they are very crucial when used to improve the writing skill.

#### **2.1.4 Post Writing**

Post writing deals with evaluation and revising (editing) work written in order to shape a piece of writing to suit the author's purpose. Surely, a student ought to revise what he or she has written and eradicate the errors identified for the achievement of a better grade in writing the exams.

#### **2.1.5 Implicit Theory**

According to Yves Karlen and Mirian Compagnoni (2016), implicit theory refers to intelligence, personality and abilities that are fixed (malleable). Implicit theorists believe that students interpret the domain specific experiences. Its role is to make students to believe, be motivated and perceive knowledge.

#### **2.1.6 Malleable Theory**

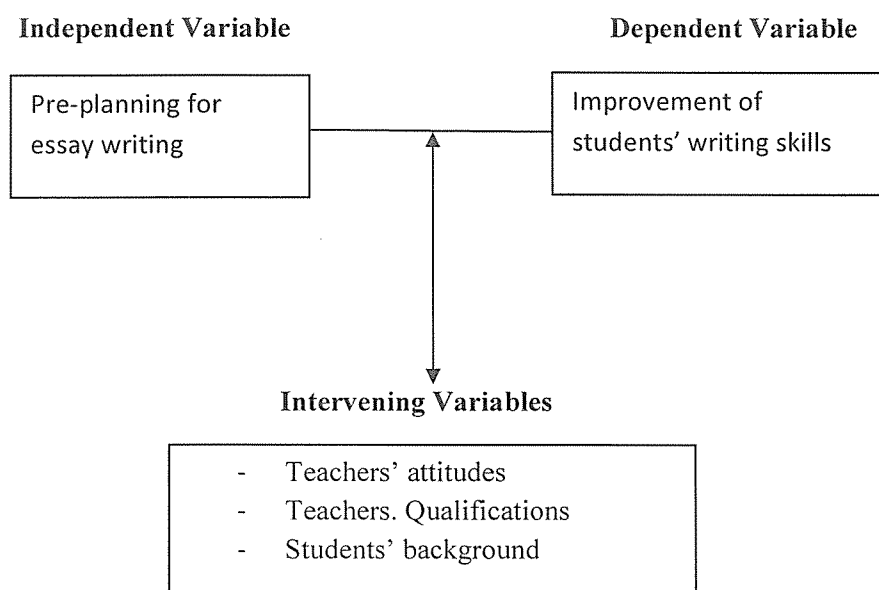
Malleable theory (Yves & Mirian) states that an individual has to plan, initiate, monitor and evaluate his or her writing process. It also propounds a writer to stay focused and be motivated in order to manage the learning environment. Factors like intelligence and instructional setting influence students' writing.

Therefore, theories presented above show that this study was worthy to be conducted in order to find out ways of rehabilitating the students' writing skills.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The study claimed that ignorance of students about pre-planning for essay writing inhibits the writing skills which affect them in all their entire academic years of their studies. According to Mogahed (2000), “teachers complain that they do not want to spend half of the class time telling students what to write.” Therefore, this study was about to find out the proper channels that can be used in order to eradicate students’ ignorance and teachers’ complaints about pre-planning for writing an essay or a composition.

The illustration below shows the conceptual framework that identifies the independent and dependent variables of this research study.



Source: From Related Studies

Fig. 1. Diagram showing the relationship between the pre-planning for essay writing, improvement of students' writing skills and the intervening variables.

The above conceptual framework shows the independent variables, the dependent variables and the intervening variables.

Pre-planning for essay writing was the independent variable dominantly comprising methods or styles about writing skills such as brainstorming, questioning, clustering and free writing. They were the fundamental methods that could be used to improve writing skills.

The improvement of students' writing skills was the dependent variable that focused on items such as structure of a paragraph like its features; composition (essay) structure, for example, an introduction, the body and the conclusion; and sentence construction that refers to topic, supporting and clincher sentences.

The intervening variable comprised teachers' attitudes. Teachers' qualifications and students' background which can affect both the independent and the dependent variables.

The literature review exposed the attitudes of teachers that they do not care about teaching the students the methods of pre-planning and skills of writing. They infer that it is a wastage of class time to teach these methods; hence identifying the intervening variable.

Another intervening variable identified was teachers' qualifications. There are many unqualified teachers who take up the role of teaching, yet they lack the knowledge about the methods of planning and skills of writing. Some are qualified ones but they lack this knowledge because they do not research to update their English subject.

The teachers' attitudes and qualification, leads to students' background. The students are faced with English language barriers because of the environments

they study in such as poor standard of some schools, the teachers who do not teach them and the students' attitudes of not practicing the skills of reading and writing; hence also identifying the intervening variable.

## **2.3 Related Studies**

### **2.3.1 Pre-Planning for Essay Writing**

The enhancement of paragraphing, structuring and pre-planning for writing an essay have not been effective. Therefore, it can be improved through a discussion about the relationship between pre-planning for essay writing and the improvement of students' writing skills. This can only be achieved through students mastering the methods of pre-writing skill which include free writing, questioning, clustering and making a list of ideas or points (Lee Odell, Richard Vacca, and Renee Hobbs, 2004).

*Free writing* refers to where the writer just jot down ideas that comes in his or her mind about a topic being written about.

*Questioning* is when a writer like a student thinks about a topic he or she writes by questioning using question words such as what, when, where, why, and how as well as recording the answers that are generated,

The *clustering* is when the writer states his or her subject in few words by drawing circles and writes in them these words that act as a list of points to write about. For example, question like: *Explain the uses of capital letters*. The cluster for this question can be illustrated as follow.

### Cluster for Capital Letter

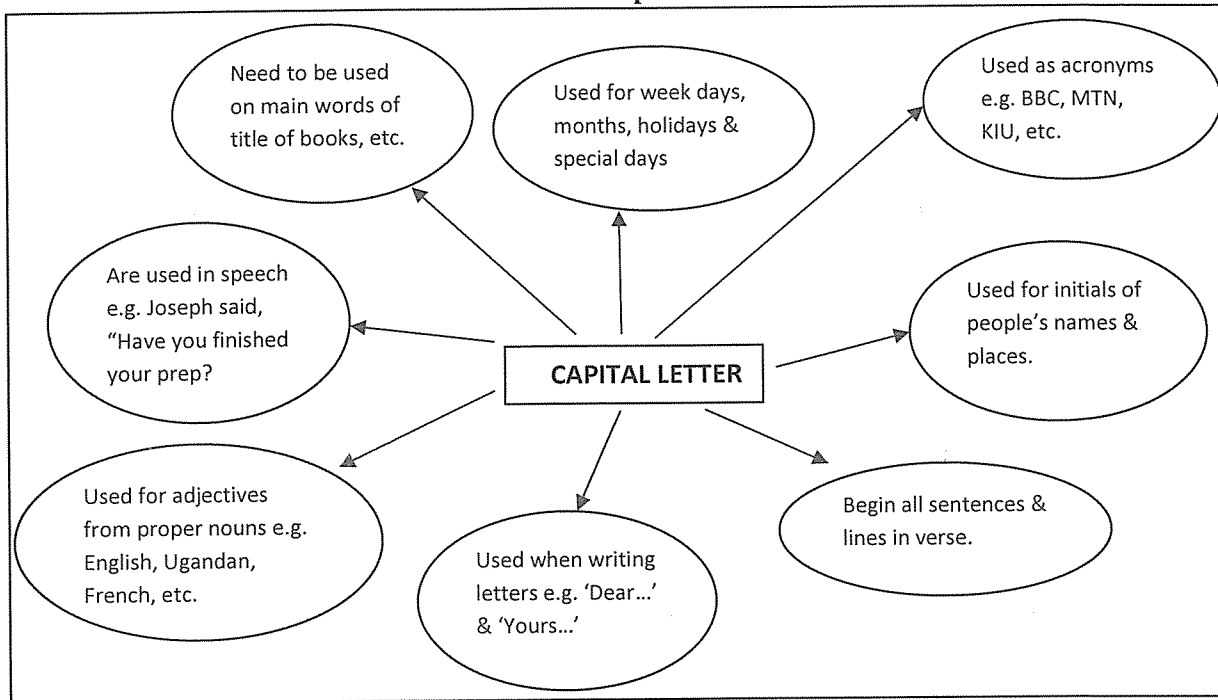


Figure No.2: Diagram showing cluster arrangement.  
(Adapted from Fitzsimmons, John Mannion. p. 7.)

Lastly, making a *list* also called *brainstorming* is the common method that students are usually encouraged to use in their essay or composition writing. It refers to making a list of ideas or points which are used to compose an essay. (Langan, John pg. 13 – 20). The following is an example of a list about the use of capitals.

### Sample of Brainstorming/Listing Points on Use of Capitals

- i. Are used in speech e.g. Joseph said, "Have you finished....."
- ii. Need to be used on main words of title of books, etc.
- iii. Used for week days, months, holidays & special days
- iv. Used as acronyms e.g. BBC, MTN, KIU, etc.
- v. Used for adjectives from proper nouns e.g. English, Ugandan, French, etc
- vi. Used for initials of people's names & places.
- vii. Begin all sentences & lines in verse.
- viii. Used when writing letters e.g. 'Dear...' & 'Yours...'

Fig. 3: Diagram showing Brainstorming/listing of points

### **2.3.2 Improvement of Students' Writing Skills.**

Another way that is said to enhance pre-planning and writing skills is by mastering how to express an idea in a paragraph (Langan, John pg. 26, 32,) as each paragraph deals or explain only one idea or point using good types of sentences such as simple, compound, and complex sentences. To write effective essay, is based on constructing good paragraph.

What comes last about improving pre-planning for writing skills is to arrange the listed ideas in sequence, logical, or timely order (ibid pg. 64-5) as well as the structure of an essay that include: how to construct an introduction, the body and the conclusion.

Historically, writing was invented roughly between 3000 B.C. and 100 B.C. According to the New Encyclopedia (1973), the Sumerians people who lived in Southern Mesopotamia are regarded as the first inventors of writing and other countries like Egypt followed. This kind of writing was being manifested in drawing pictures and characters to enforce memory. It was invented only to record business activities (Chailorne Robert (1990))

In 16th century, Michel Montaigne (1500) a French writer introduced composition writing and he was the first to call a written composition an *essay* meaning *trials* and *attempts*. His essays are regarded as informal and were translated from French into English by John Florio (The New Encyclopedia - 1994).

Basing on the World Encyclopedia (1994), there developed two types of essay which included: (1) *personal* also called *informal* essay and (2) *formal* essay. The informal essay was developed by Michel Montaigne whereas formal essay was spearheaded by Sir France Bacon, (1500 – 1600), an English Philosopher and a Statesman. Bacon composed ten (10) essays that explain how to lead a sensible life such as fear, truth, wealth and death.

Formal essay is defined as a composition that has serious purpose, dignity, logical, organization and length.

Informal essay is defined or characterized by personal elements (meaning self revelation, individual tastes and experiences, and confidential manners), such as humour, graceful style, rambling structure, and unconventionality or novelty of themes, name it all. Informal essay is used for literary criticism, political manifestos, learned arguments, and reflections of the author.

Basing on the above historical events, writing skill is a global problem whereby every country of the world both the developed and non developed countries face it among the students from secondary to higher institutions. According to Selingo Jeffrey J. (8/11/2017), states:

“Employers wants to hire college graduates who can write coherently.....survey said that hiring leaders ... writing skill is one of the biggest gaps in work place readiness... my students cannot write a clear sentence to save their lives.”

He quotes another scholar called Lesilie Nicholas who said:

Students need to learn that writing process is not linear but include pre-writing process... revising and editing “ (make correction).

From national point of view, Nabiryo, Nancy Rosemary (2007) made her investigation to find out the factors that influence the basic writing skills of English language. However, among these factors, there was no method of pre-planning for essay writing revealed. Her finds indicated that:

“Though learners like writing, they do not practice enough to develop their skills of writing in their formal school...”

She also found out that in Uganda, 43% performed highly, 29% were average and 28% were weak in writing skills. That is why this research study was put forward to investigate factors that can lead to the improvement of writing skills which was conducted in secondary schools, Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda.

### **2.3.3 The Relationship between Pre-Planning and Improvement of Students' Writing Skills.**

Independent variables are the value models that can be changed or controlled, and they provide the input which is modified by the model to change the output. Dependent variables are values that result from the independent variables. From these two definitions, this research study was done purposely to study how pre-planning for essay writing can lead to the improvement of students' writing skills.

## **2.4 Gaps Identified**

Gaps are missing pieces in the research literature. The gaps in this literature review is that though pre-planning for essay writing is found in various English textbooks such as Language Network (2001) and Grammar and Composition 1st (1984), the relationship between pre-planning for essay writing and improvement of students' writing skills has not been emphasized, clarified and commonly practiced in class environment and now it needed to be addressed (Lit. gaps & future, 2018).

The purpose of this research, therefore, was to investigate the suitable channels and methods to be used for the improvement of students' writing skills.

## **2.5 Objective**

- The data collection, classification, and presentation can be useful at all levels of education so that a change to improvement can be experienced.
- The information of this research study can be recorded, stored, and retrieved for class teaching and learning writing skills and for further research study.
- It can also be used to sensitize the students and internalize in them a writing morale.

## **2.6 Use of Pre-Planning for Essay Writing**

Pre-planning for essay writing is very crucial to writing skills because it enhances the writer like the students to arrange ideas or point in a logical order.

Pre-planning is the brainstorming of points on a piece of paper (Gebhardt, Richard C. 1982 *ref. stage of articulation theory*) in words or phrases before starting to write an essay (a composition). The types of sentences, nature of paragraph, and stages of essay are the key areas that are written based on pre-planning as explained below.

### **2.6.1 Sentence Structure and Function**

Pre-planning improves the sentence construction such as constructing simple, compound, or complex sentences. When using pre-planning for writing skills, a topic, supporting and concluding sentences are well mastered and used in their appropriate places. The functional or mood sentences such as declarative, operational, interrogative and exclamatory sentences are well used while writing an essay.

### **2.6.2 Nature of Paragraphing**

Paragraph writing is well written if the pre-planning has been done. Usually, a paragraph writer ought to know what sentence to begin and end with. Pre-planning enhances the writer like the student to learn that a single paragraph deals with only one idea or point. It enables the writer to arrange his or her ideas in sequence, logical, or chronological order to make an essay flow smoothly.

### **2.6.3 Essay**

An essay or composition is also constructed based on pre-planning for writing skills. An essay is a series of paragraphs talking about one main idea called a theme. A composition is also defined as a piece of writing made up of several

paragraphs; (Language Network 2001 p. 368). Pre-planning enables the writer or student to use paragraphs in order to explain the main idea. These paragraphs are written in stages and these are: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

#### **2.6.3.1 Introduction**

An introduction is a paragraph that states or defines the main idea or a theme of the essay. Pre-planning enhances the writer to show ideas that are to be talked about in the whole essay. For student academic essay writing, one paragraph is enough to introduce the thesis.

#### **2.6.3.2 The body**

The body is all about the explanation or discussion about the thesis in detail using various paragraphs. These paragraphs are also referred to as supporting paragraphs because they give additional information about the thesis being written about. They are like building blocks of an essay (composition). Pre-planning helps the writer or student to arrange these paragraphs basing on the significance of ideas to be presented or discussed in the essay. In other words, the body consists of various paragraphs each one explaining a single idea or point.

#### **2.6.3.3 Conclusion**

A conclusion is what summarizes the discussion about main idea. With regards to students' academic essay (composition) writing, it is always written in just one brief paragraph by re-stating the central idea and hinting about the ideas or points discussed in the body.

## **2.7 Limitations**

These are the limitations or barriers that hinder the initiation or improvement of writing skills. Questionnaire, observation and interview were used to disclose the limitations or problems as some of them are under discussed.

### **2.7.1 Frustration**

Frustration is one of the problems that hinder students' writing skills. Many of them are frustrated in their attempt at written expression because of difficulties in the aspects of writing problems such as spellings, punctuation and handwriting. Such writing problems draw their attention away from focus on ideas (Isaacson, Steven 1997). Graham's research quoted by Isaacson reveals that poor handwriting and spellings leads to serious barriers to students' writing skills because they take several years to learn them.

### **2.7.2 Lack of Knowledge about Writing**

Many students do not understand basic concepts, for example, question approach, genre, text structure, writing for audience, to mention but a few. This is also a great limitation to students about writing skills.

### **2.7.3 Environments**

Environment is one of the barriers that affect students' writing skills. In Uganda, for example, several students are raised in poor environment where there are no good schools and trained teachers. Sometimes libraries are a real myth to their academic. Many of them are just promoted from one class to another, for example, Universal Primary Education, without mastering the skills of writing taught at a certain level, ( *ref. Nabiryo, Nancy Rosemary (2007)*). When these

pupils go to secondary, they find it very difficult to construct a correct grammatical sentence or paragraph; hence a great limitation to writing skills.

#### **2.7.4 Poverty**

Poverty is a big problem everywhere in the world. This leads many students not to learn and master the writing skills such as paragraph and sentence construction which requires a pre-planning before writing an essay. For example, many parents in Uganda do not have money to buy textbooks that enable their children to master the culture of reading and writing. Some do not have the little money asked at schools instead they just tell the child to stay home. All these are strong barriers to students' writing skills. (With regards to references see page 47).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments, validity and reliability testing, data gathering procedure, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

#### **3.1 Research Design .**

The study employed a descriptive correlation research design. Descriptive correlation design was used to determine the relationship between pre-planning and improvement of essay writing skills. The study also used study quantitative and qualitative approaches in nature as a source of data. The quantitative approach was used to get perception of the respondents while qualitative was used to get the in-depth information about the study.

#### **3.2 Target population**

The target population was 300 out of 1676 respondents which included students from Senior One to Senior Six respectively of the three secondary schools understudy.

#### **3.3 Sample size**

A sample of 300 students was chosen from three schools. A sample of 100 students in each school from S. 1 to S. 6 was chosen. The chosen sample size was then used in the actual data collection through methods such as interview, questionnaire and observation.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure**

Simple random sampling was used to choose the respondents. The names of the students were in a box then the researcher picked the names for each class in three secondary schools.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

The instruments which were used in the study included the questionnaires, interview and observation. These research instruments were used as guides to the findings of the research study. The questionnaires were divided into three sections; the first section focused on Senior One (S. 1) and Senior Two (S. 2), the second section focused on Senior Three (S. 3) and Senior Four (S. 4), and the third one focused on Senior Five (S. 5) and Senior Six (S. 6). They consisted essay questions and were self administered by the respondents. The results were then collected between a period of three to four weeks and they were arranged, organized for analysis and presentation.

The interview was conducted in the same way that S. 1 and S. 2 were interviewed on the same day, S. 3 and S.4 on a separate day and S. 5 and S. 6 on their own day.

Finally, the observation instrument was done when the respondents were busy answering the questionnaires in writing.

### 3.6 Validity and reliability of the Research Instrument

#### 3.5.1 Validity of Instruments

Validity is the extent to which a concept, or conclusion is well established and corresponded accurately to the real world. It can also mean the measure of issues intended to measure. In this research study, it was adopted basing on the advice of the supervisor. After designing the questions, it enhanced in some way to identify the irrelevant questions in the instruments and the mistakes were rectified by putting them into proper questionnaires that suited the objective of the study. The proper questionnaires were handed to the research supervisor to weigh the validity of those questions basing on the objectives formed for the study. Later, a content validity index (CVI) of 0.75 was measured by using the following formula,

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of items rated in the questionnaire}}$$

$$CVI = \frac{12}{16} = 0.75$$

#### 3.5.2 Reliability of Instruments

Reliability is the extent to which the measuring instruments produce consistent scores when the same groups of individuals are repeatedly measured under the same conditions. The researcher used test and re-test was used to test for reliability. Fifteen (15) respondents from each school totaling forty-five (45) respondents were used to answer the questions. These respondents were not the

actual respondents of the study. After two weeks the same questionnaires were given to the same respondents.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedure**

The primary data was used for research study to collect data through questionnaire, interview and observation methods. The secondary data was gathered from sources of data such as textbooks, reports like dissertations, magazines and newspapers, to list a few. In terms of data processing, the collected data was read through and the relevant one which suited the study was drawn (see Appendix II about the interview schedule).

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Special analysis from the processed data was made in order to test whether it supported or justified the hypothesis or not. The work of editing for the truth and organizing were the tools used to analyze the raw data. Frequency and percentage were used to analyze the data.

With regard to presentation, the collected data was explained, described and analyzed into meaningful words, sentences, statements; paragraphs, ideas, tables and figures which all together made up information. The research report has chapters such as an introduction, literature review, methodology, data presentation, conclusion and recommendation.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Good attitudes such as being loyal to the respondents holding secrets given as

their confidential data were highly observed. Coercion and deception behaviors were avoided and no abusive language was used but only logical questions were asked the respondents. Proper conduct such as being on time and following the procedures like consent and getting an introductory letter plus other requirements were observed too during the study.

### **3.10 Limitations of the Study**

During the research period, there were some constraints that interrupted the study. Some of these were: sample size, accessions, longitudinal effects, language influence and culture bias (USC Libraries of University of Southern California, 2019) as they are explained below.

Cultural bias was a limitation that interrupted the study. Some respondents were biased assuming that their school was going to be exposed negatively, or that their positive struggle for academic standard was going to be revealed as some schools nowadays work for sounding grades, popularity and famous.

Language influence was one of the limitations of the study as some respondents developed anxiety during interview and observation exercises. They were embarrassed with the terms used in the study which portrayed a language barrier, hence a limitation.

Another limitation was longitudinal effect whereby time was limited because the respondents were very busy with their studies; therefore, it was difficult to meet

them all. This led to poor collection of questionnaires as some did not respond on the days as it was scheduled and others never returned their answers.

Access was also one of the limitations to the study. A number of schools that were approached some objected a study to be conducted in their campuses. This also delayed the research study to begin.

Basing on sample size, a number of respondents was low as the two schools contributed less than the average number of respondents that was expected. Another setback was that some respondents did not respond positively or return the questionnaires.

All in all, sample size, access, longitudinal effects, language influence and cultural bias were the major limitation in this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents data gathered from fieldwork. Questionnaires were distributed at three secondary schools located in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda. Tools used were the questionnaire, observation and interview. The research was both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

The preponderance of the respondents was students of the above mentioned schools. This means that the research covered a range of Senior One (S.1) to Senior Six (S.6). The rating was based on pre-planning for writing the essay (composition), essay structure and paragraph construction.

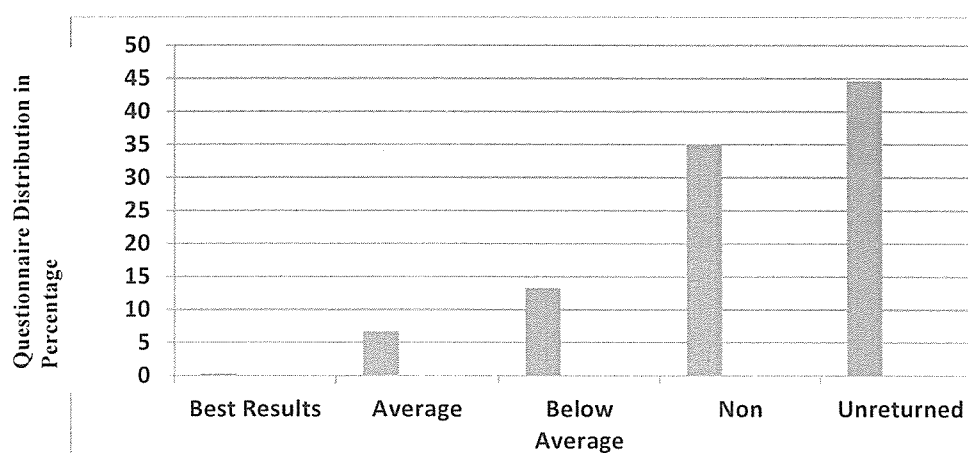
The respondents were very co-operative in giving data. The responses on questionnaires, most of the students did not know much about the subject such as pre-planning and features of a paragraph, yet it was the fundamental technique that produced much data in comparison to interview and observation tools. The respondents interviewed were all the six classes of each school, and the statistics about the distribution of questionnaires are presented below in table 4.1

**Table 4.1 Showing the Distribution of Questionnaires**

Grading	No. of Questionnaire	Percentage (%)
Best Results	1	0.3
Average	20	6.7
Below Average	40	13.3
Non-sensible Results	105	35
Unreturned	134	44.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

The table below reveals the respondents' reaction to the questionnaire. 1(0.3%) of the respondents were the best in giving facts and correct data; 20 (6.7%) were at average level, 40 (13.3%) were poor in giving data and 105 (35%) did not show any of the skills of writing a standard essay. In addition, 134 (44.7%) of the questionnaires distributed were not returned. The above information is plotted on an histogram as follow.

**A Graph Showing Distribution of Questionnaire**



Vertical scale: 1cm rep. 10% of Grading

**Figure 4: Graph for Questionnaire Distribution**

#### 4.1 General Information on Respondents

The respondents were the students in nature selected from three secondary schools found in Rubaga Division, Kampala District, Uganda.

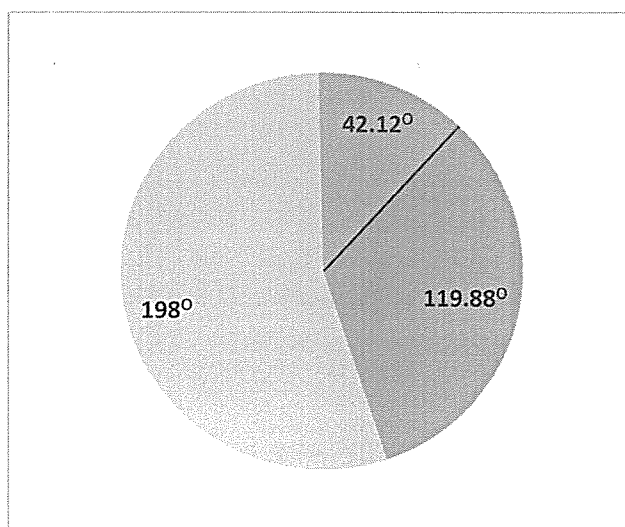
The following is the data collected from the above three schools.

**A Table 4.2 Showing the No. of Questionnaire Returned**

Grouping	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Degrees
Namungoona Parents S. S.	20	11.7	42.12
Chwa II Memorial College	57	33.3	119.88
Namungoona High School	94	55	198
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>360</b>

The above information is here presented on a pie chart as follow.

**A Pie Chart Returned Questionnaire**



Namungoona Parents Secondary School.  
Chwa II Memorial College  
Namungoona High School

Figure 5: Pie chart for Return of Questionnaires

According to the chart above, 42.12° of questionnaires were collected from Namungoona Parents Senior Secondary School. It is the smallest number in degrees in terms of the returned questionnaires among the three schools.

Chwa II Memorial College contributed 119.88° of questionnaires returned, and it is the second to the smallest number in degrees of Namungoona Parents Senior Secondary School. The reason is that some classes such as students of higher level were very few in number.

Additionally, Namungoona High School was the largest contributor of questionnaires returned with 198°. This occurred because most of the students in every class participated in giving their responses.

#### **4.2. Pre-planning**

Basing on the first objective, it was discovered that there was a number of respondents in both lower and higher levels who showed the skill of pre-planning for composition or essay writing. A small number of respondents knew how to make *brainstorming plan*, but with the *clustering plan* and the *questioning method*, did not appear in any of the collected results as the table below shows the grading of the three plans and the title.

listing points, and with the clustering and questioning, no results were collected about them as the graph above indicates a 0 (0%).

With regards to the title, 98 (57%) of the respondents knew how to place a title in its position when writing a composition. This is a reasonable percentage in terms of know how to plan; however, it would have been at least 85% for the skill to be regarded as effective.

Lastly about the above graph, 68 (40%) of the respondents did not know anything about pre-planning for composition writing. This means the percentage of respondents who did not know to make a pre-plan is very high which means that if 5 (3%) is deducted from 300 (100%) leaving out the title percentage; the result becomes 295 (95%) of those respondents that did not know anything about pre-planning. In other words, the 295 (95%) of respondents used a *free writing* method which is a matter of just jotting down ideas that comes to the respondents' minds about a topic being written about. The free writing technique, therefore, cannot be effective for academic composition or essay writing.

#### **4.2.1 Paragraph Structure**

From the findings about the structure of a paragraph and the essay (composition) structure, identified the second objective. There were a small proportion of respondents who demonstrated clear paragraph writing. The rest of the respondents lacked skills in indicating a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence within a paragraph as the Table No. 4.4 shows below.

#### 4.2.2 Composition (Essay) Structure

The study revealed that the respondents had some knowledge about the composition structure. The statistics in the Table No. 4.5 show that they were familiar with writing the introduction better than writing the body and the conclusion.

**A Table 4.5 Showing Composition (Essay) Structure**

Composition (Essay) Features	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Introduction	55	32.16
The Body	54	31.58
Conclusion	35	20.47
Non-sensible Results	27	15.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100</b>

From the statistical information that is in the above table, 55 (32.16%) indicates that the respondents knew about the way an introduction is written. This means that, 67.84% lack the skill of know how to write it. For example, some respondents did not bother to define the central idea, explain and conclude it whereas others just wrote one sentence without defining the key words or the theme they were writing about.

Another significant area about the structure of a essay (composition) is the body. The study, according to the figures in the above table, 54 (31.58%) of respondents were capable to write their paragraphs in a correct way. 68.42%,

therefore, reveals the weaknesses of the respondents not knowing how paragraphs are constructed in the body of an essay or a composition.

A good example is that some respondents used one sentence and it was hard to identify whether it was a topic sentence or supporting sentence. Poor punctuation was also another issue that contributed to poor construction of the paragraphs in the body structure of a composition.

The construction of a conclusion is ranked as the poorest among the three features of a composition or an essay structure. According to the statistics from the table above, 27 (15.79%) is too low which indicates that the majority of respondents did not know how a conclusion of an essay or composition is written.

The findings showed that a large proportion of respondents did not write it at all whereas a small proportion gave inadequate information in relation to the topic or the theme they wrote about. In other words, most of them ended their composition or essay with an idea or a point instead of a proper conclusion.

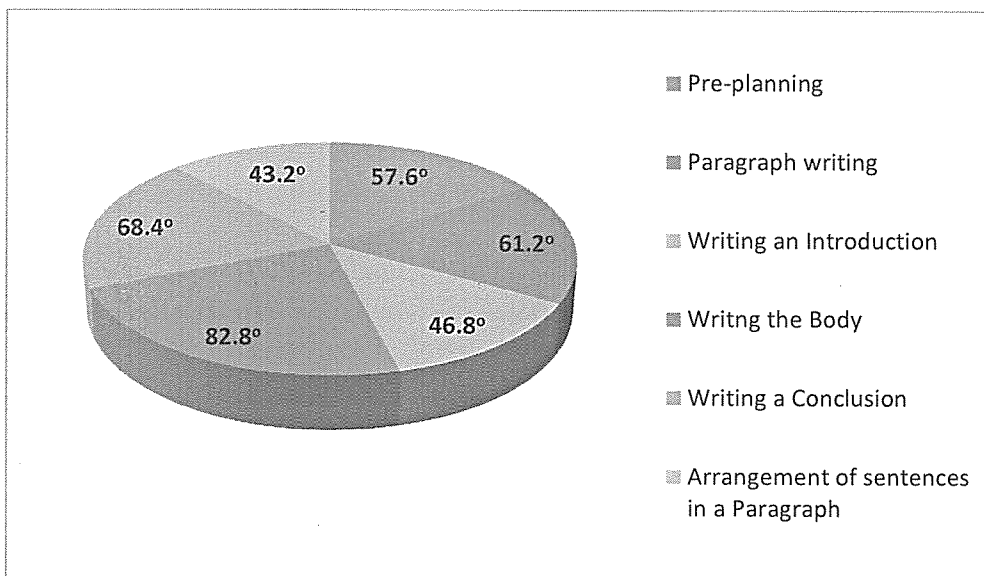
#### **4.2.3 Interview**

The discovery through interview from the respondents was based on the third objective. It disclosed that research terms such as pre-planning, features of a paragraph and essay structure that were used were strange to them until explanation was made then they apprehended the terms. The table below presents their response to interview questions.

**Table 4.6 Showing Interview Feedback**

Terms used	No. of Respondents interviewed	Percentage (%)	Degrees
Pre-planning	22	16	57.6
Paragraph writing	23	17	61.2
Writing an Introduction	17	13	46.8
The body writing	31	23	82.8
Conclusion writing	26	19	68.4
Arrangement of Sentences in a paragraph	16	12	43.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>360</b>

**A Pie Chart showing Interview Feedback**



**Figure 7: Pie chart showing Interview Feedback**

The findings through interview are rated that 57.6° of respondents responded that they knew about the meaning of pre-planning of a composition (essay). The respondents gave the feedback after apprehending this that it meant a list of points after thorough explanation to them.

61.2° of the respondents agreed that they knew how to write a paragraph; however, when they were asked the features of a paragraph, no one adhered to give any feedback to that question. Hence, they knew just the appearance of a paragraph such as indenting, but did not know what constitutes a paragraph to be a paragraph.

With regards to writing an introduction, 46.8° accepted that they knew how to construct an introduction. Although, some regarded an introduction to be having a definition of a central idea only; others understood it as a mere statement without mentioning the central idea and possibly the ideas to discuss about; hence they did not know the features an introduction should have.

Another finding through interview was about writing the body. 82.8° of respondents acknowledged that they knew to construct the body of a composition or essay. However, the majority meant just to outline points, writing one long or short sentence, or writing one large paragraph on a full page or more pages with various sentences. Thus, the majority did not mention some features of the body of an essay or a composition.

According to the table 4.6, 26 respondents are attributed to writing of a conclusion. Here, 68.3° of respondents gave their views that they knew how to construct a conclusion. Nevertheless, the majority meant just to write a single sentence with no reference to or re-stating the central idea.

Lastly, 43.2° of respondents acknowledged that they knew the arrangement of and the types of sentences a paragraph should have. Unfortunately, a large

proportion of them did not know which sentence to begin with, which ones come in the middle and which comes last; hence the achievements of the three objectives.

#### **4.2.4 Findings through Observation**

The study through observation revealed that the majority of respondents did not use pre-planning skills of *brainstorming*, *questioning* and *clustering* of ideas or points. They generated their points from their heads similar to *free writing* style.

Poor paragraphing was another negative response observed among the respondents. A large proportion of them wrote one sentence of between 20 and 50 words; hence, sentences such as a topic sentence were not easy to be identified. A small proportion of respondents indented each paragraph, but punctuation marks such as commas and full stops were rarely used.

To a large extent, the respondents who were observed did not know how to write an introduction and a conclusion; others did not write any of these for their composition. Some just gave a brief definition in an introduction and wrote one brief sentence for their conclusion.

With regards to the body, respondents were observed writing one long paragraph for the whole essay (composition). Hence, the discussion above shows the achievement of the study objectives.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the research report. It presents the discussion, conclusion, interpretation and the recommendation of the study. The findings of the study are discussed and interpreted before the conclusion. The significant solutions to the concerns discovered are also included in this chapter as shown below.

#### 5.1 Discussions

In this section, relevant issues about the study are discussed basing on the three objectives of the study. To begin with, English language became a chronical problem in most of the common wealth countries and Uganda is one of these countries. It is because when the British came to colonize Africa, they also colonized the languages and cultures of Africans (Olla Cosmas 1994 & Tembe Juliet Dec., 2006). Being a second language to them, students of Africa still enbraces the difficulties of learning and mastering of reading and especially writing skills in English Language.

As already stated in chapter one, a large proportion of students of Uganda never developed and improved a culture of writing skill. The methodologies or styles such as pre-planning before writing an essay or composition that comprises brainstorming, among others, (Gebhardt, Richard C. 1982, *ref. pre=writing*) that enhances proper and standard academic writing of an essay never been fully disseminated to learners; hence a chronical problem to the majority of Ugandan students.

According to the research study findings, the literature review testifies the above statement as it disclosed that teachers despise “to spend half of class time instructing the students about what and how to write.” (Mogahed 2000). The theories such as malleable theory, (Yves & Mirian 2016), among others, presented in literature review also emphasizes the need and the support of the hypothesis of this study to venture and reinforce the methodologies of writing skill.

Another discovery from literature review was that there are a number of planning methods for essay or composition writing such as free writing, brainstorming, questioning and clustering. However, basing on the findings, it was only the free writing method that the respondents tended to use when writing their work, yet this method strongly does not help a student to write a logical and an organized academic essay (composition) during examination hour. Questioning and free writing are only suitable for homework essay (composition) assignment.

According to the findings of the study, a large proportion of respondents did not show the skill of writing an essay or composition. Table No. 1 shows that it was only 1(0.3%) out of 300 (100%) respondents who came up with a standard way of essay writing. It is a worsed percentage compared to 43% of Nabiryo, Nancy Rosemary (2007). Reasons were that the rest did not list points ((Gebhardt, Richard C. 1982, *ref. pre-writing theory*) before they started writng, but they used a free writing method, and some did not remember to white a title; hence a relationship between pre-planning and the improvement of students’ writing skills.

On the other hand however, 1 (0.3%) is a great significe in portraying how a pre-planning method or style can be effective in bringing excellent writing results. It also testifies that one who uses a style of pre-planning ends up writing a standard essay (composition) that yield excellent results; therefore, it should highly be reinforced to learners.

From the three instruments used to collect data, it was discovered that there were some respondents in lower levels such as S.1 who knew how to compose a composition compared to higher level like S. 5 and 6. Reasons could be the barriers such as one's background as some teachers do not bother to teach, poor environment like rural schools or non standard schools and parents' nature of poverty.

Another significant finding was about English grammar usage. The majority of respondents had grammatical errors such as spellings, poor use of pronouns and misplacement of parts of speech in a sentence. From observation point of view, these errors occurred because the respondents did not revise or eddit (Gebhardt, Richard C. 1982 *ref. post writing theory*) their answers after writing.

With regards to paragraph writing, a number of respondents wrote a single paragraph for a full essay of 500 – 800, or a composition of 500 -700, or 300 – 400 words. Some knew how to categorize the paragraphs in the body, (Lee & Vaace 2004), but used one sentence for each paragraph and others did not have the topic and a clincher sentences for their paragraphs.

Finally, the structure of the essay or composition support the need for this research study as most of the respondents lacked the skills of writing an introduction, the body and the conclusion. Basing on the study, the majority did not begin their essay or composition with an introduction, (ibid), but used a point or an idea as their introduction instead. As already mentioned in the above paragraph, almost all respondents wrote a single sentence for each paragraph in the body and almost none adhered to write a conclusion; hence a great need to address this concern.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Basing on the findings of the study, the following were the conclusions about pre-planning, and students' writing skills. Pre-planning is a crucial to the improvement of students' essay (composition) writing skills. It organizes the student's mind and thoughts before writing begins whereby ideas are arranged logically and makes what is written to flow smoothly in the whole essay.

Pre-planning to be effective style of improving the students' writing skills (such as brainstorming and clustering) ought to be adhered to and used whenever an essay is written. This makes an essay to appear well organized and ideas flow easily when read.

Improvement of students' writing skills occur by mastering the structure of the essay or composition. The standard arrangement and organization of ideas in paragraphs such as constructing standard introduction, the body and the

conclusion are very prominent. It is also significant in that sentences have to be arranged as they ought to appear or written in each paragraph.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following were the recommendations.

- i. One of the best way to approach the above concerns is to teach the methods of planning for a essay or composition writing right from primary level. This can be done through showing the learners how to brainstorm or cluster the ideas before a story writing begins. This to be effective, reinforcement to planning should be applied.
- ii. The students should be taught to read intensively and extensively; when reading, they should observe and master the appearance, style and the arrangement of paragraphs such as how ideas are presented in an introduction, the body and the conclusion of an essay or a composition. The learners should be highly encouraged to practice diary and journal writing. By these, a student can develop and improve the skills of writing.
- iii. The teachers should try their level best to teach, guide and encourage the learners to practice planning and writing; paragraph writing should be one of the major topics to be taught at all levels of education. Text books and pamphlets which explain the skills of planning and writing skills should be highly recommened by the teacher to be bought and use or read

them day by day. This helps the learners to look at the model and imitate the examples presented in these books.

- iv. The students should share the knowledge they had acquired with their colleagues; participate in debate and use a library to search and research about pre-planning and writing skills. There should also be some ways to offer incentives to attract competitions among students, classes and schools. Bursaries, praises, gifts and scholarship could also be put in place in order to attract the students to improve their writing skills.

#### **5.4 Area for Further Research**

Further Research could be conducted in areas such as

- i. The level of English grammar usage such as when to use formal and informal writing in academic writing.
- ii. The performance between private and government schools on pre-planning for essay writing and writing skills.
- iii. The use and the difference between traditional structure and the new model structure called block structure of an academic essay or composition writing.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I

#### Questionnaire

Dear Students,

A research study is being conducted by Kiyimba T. Elias that focus on **“Pre-planning for Essay Writing and the Improvement of Students’ Writing Skills in Selected Secondary Schools in Rubaga Division.”** As you have been one of the selected school respondents to participate in the activity, you are hereby requested kindly to provide information by answering the following questionnaire.

All the findings from you are to be used for the research purposes and will be treated with excellent confidentiality. Your name must be withheld and nothing of the information you give will be quoted in relation to your position.

Thank you.

### S. 5 & S 6

Choose **one** of the following topics and write an essay using **500 - 800** words.  
**questionnaire**

1. Account for the increase in the level of unemployment in Uganda.
2. Domestic violence is primarily caused by drunkenness. Discuss.
3. Assess the contribution of science and technology in the development of Uganda.

**Dear Students,**

A research study is being conducted by Kiyimba T. Elias that focus on **“Pre-planning for Essay Writing and the Improvement of Students’ Writing Skills in Selected Secondary Schools in Rubaga Division.”** As you have been one of the selected school respondents to participate in the activity, you are hereby requested kindly to provide information by answering the following questionnaire.

All the findings from you are to be used for the research purposes and will be treated with excellent confidentiality. Your name must be withheld and nothing of the information you give will be quoted in relation to your position.

Thank you.

### **S. 3 & S. 4**

Choose **one** of the following topics and write a composition of **500 - 600** words.

#### **Questionnaire**

1. Discuss the causes of road accident.
2. Write a composition with a title, “Action speaks louder than words.
3. How best can corruption be fought in your country?

## APPENDIX II

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Oral Questions

1. Did you ever made a pre-planning before wring a composition / an essay?
2. Do you know the logical arrangement of points before writing a composition/essay?
3. Do you know how to write a paragraph?
4. When writing an essay, do you know how to write an introduction?
5. What about writing the body, do you know how it is written?
6. Are you aware of writing a conclusion?
7. Do you know to arrange sentences in a paragraph?

#### 1. Interview schedule

DATE	TYPES OF RESPONDENCE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS IN THREE SCHOOLS	BY PHYSICAL INTERACTION IN CLASS OR OUTSIDE
28/03/2019	S. 1 Students	20	class
28/03/2019	S.2 Students	25	outside
08/04/2019	S. 3 Students	30	class
08/04/2019	S. 4 Students	35	class
12/04/2019	S. 5 Students	30	outside
12/04/2019	S. 6 Students	35	class
	<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	