

Effectiveness of Strategies Used in Developing Accuracy and Coherence in Writing among Public Primary School Pupils in Namtumbo District, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study qualitatively explored the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers in developing writing accuracy and coherence among public primary school pupils in Namtumbo District, Tanzania. It used the case study design involving the population of 736 purposefully sampled individuals including 16 teachers and 720 pupils from eight (8) schools in Namtumbo District Council. The study used classroom observation, focus group discussion, classroom continuous assessment and documentary review in data collection. Content analysis was adopted to analyse data and the findings revealed that teachers used various strategies in teaching how to write alphabetical letters including scaffolding, brief explicit lessons, alphabetic order, songs and teaching aids. It was further found out that some of these strategies such as using a talk-chalkboard strategy to teach punctuation marks were not effective to scaffold pupils and make them master writing. The study recommends teachers to use interactive strategies to enhance students' acquisition of the writing skills.

Keywords: Teachers' Strategies; Accuracy and Coherency in Writing; Writing Skills; Public Primary Schools.

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Introduction

Scholars in early learning stages (Burke, 2010; Graham, 2010 & Dockrell et al., 2015) conceptualise writing as putting marks on paper(s) or any appealing surface. They add that writing competency includes, apart from legible writings, the quantity, quality of such and an act of self-clarification.

Primary education is the foundation of formal education as it prepares the mind and trains the

child for further academic pursuits (Juliana & Clinton, 2015). Although primary education plays a critical role for children by making them acquire writing skills (WS), not all pupils successfully acquire WS. In the United States of America, 28% of the fourth, eighth and twelfth grade pupils were below the grade level for writing (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2012; Williams, 2012; Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2013;). In England, 81% of stage 2 pupils achieved the expected writing level (level 4 or above) in 2013 compared to 75% of pupils

achieving the expected level in 2012 (Alcock & Barker, 2016).

In India, there is an increase of writing difficulties (Rajarshi, 2014). In China, majority (91%) of the ethnic minority primary school pupils in Hong Kong do not know how to write Chinese or their WS are considered to be poor (Chan, 2011& Sandhu, 2015). West African countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, Sierra Leone, Benin and Senegal had the grip of writing crisis where writing proficiency test scores for 2010 - 2011 showed that the fourth and fifth grade pupils were not proficient writers' (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2013).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, many pupils lack basic WS; for example, 43% of class II pupils involved in the National Writing Assessment could not write a simple phrase in the Portuguese language while 79% of the class III pupils were not able to generate, revise and edit ideas in their writing (Bold, Kellogg & Fisher, 2016). In South Africa, two-thirds of pupils in grades VIII to XII reported writing papers of only one paragraph on a weekly basis (Anson & Beach, 2009).

In East Africa, two out of three pupils in STD III fall short of basic WS and among STD II pupils, one out of four pupils does not have STD II levels of WS. Kenya had the highest level of WS learning outcomes (70%) compared to the lowest WS learning outcomes (51%) achieved in Uganda (Uwezo, 2014).

In Tanzania, the acquisition of WS has been depicted as a dominant problem facing majority of the primary school pupils. Kumburu (2011) shows that one out of five pupils completing STD IV could not write even a Swahili simple story. It is obvious that there is a large risk that these pupils will remain illiterate as they lack WS. Hamzah (2010) points out that WS is not only a vital tool for learning and communicating but a major means of assessing learning as most of the examinations are assessed on written performance. Mkumbo (2011) argues that WS are so important to primary school pupils; and if not achieved during their lower level of schooling, then education should be counted to have failed to make our pupils literate.

Despite the assertion that after completing STD II pupils are expected to have achieved basic literacy and numeracy skills such as the ability to write, read and solve arithmetic problems (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 1995), in Namtumbo DC, majority of

the PPSPs do not acquire WS adequately as expected (Mwageni, 2015). The government of Tanzania adopted In-service Education and Training (INSET) and benefited from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) through Literacy and Numeracy Education Support (LANES) programme and the Education Quality Improvement Programme for Tanzania (EQUIP-T) with the intention of addressing the challenge of low mastery of literacy and numeracy among children (UNESCO, 2014; URT, 2015 & Uwezo, 2016).

Although the Tanzanian government, donors and private partners have invested much efforts to improve WS among primary school pupils, yet a good number of PPSPs have been reported to be unable to acquire WS (EQUIP-Tanzania, 2015; URT, 2015 & Uwezo, 2016). With a view to finding a suitable solution of improving WS among PPSPs in Tanzania, it was therefore necessary to explore the strategies used by teachers in developing accuracy and coherence in writing among PPSPs in Tanzania focusing on Namtumbo DC with a view to examining their effectiveness since the previous studies did not address the same. This study explored strategies used by teachers' in developing accuracy and coherence in writing among PPSPs with a view to examining their effectiveness. To attain this purpose, the study embarked on addressing two research questions, namely:

1. What are the strategies used by teachers to develop PPSPs' abilities in forming alphabetical letters?
2. What are the strategies used by teachers to develop accuracy and coherence in writing among PPSPs?

Literature Review

This part presents the theoretical framework and the conceptual reviews on writing and mechanics of forming alphabets, accuracy and coherence in writing. It also reviewed empirical literatures on strategies used by teachers in forming alphabetical letters and developing accuracy and coherence in writing, and it delineates the gaps.

Theoretical Framework

This study was tailored around the L. S. Vygotsky's (1896 – 1934) socio-cultural theory which places social context at the heart of learning. It has been argued that human learning cannot be understood independently from the social, cultural forces and interactions that influence individuals (Vygotsky,

1978). Conceptual and cultural learning occurs through a dialogue called a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Barnard & Campbell, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). ZPD is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, learning is not merely conveyed, but is mutually created by the participants in a structured dialogue in which the more capable partner promotes the learning of the less able by building and progressively dismantling. A scaffold within the learner is enabled to progress from the present to a higher level of ability.

Vygotsky recognizes that the learner can write today with assistance, but she/he will write independently tomorrow (Fleer, 2002 & Sheffer, 2009). As far as Standard I & II pupils interact with their teachers, then the effectiveness of teachers' strategies could enhance the development of WS as expected by Education and Training Policy (URT, 1995 & URT, 2015). The theory was seen useful to guide this study as it emphasizes social interactions that allow teachers to employ different strategies for the development of WS among PPSPs. In spite of its strengths, the theory does not propose any specific methodology for better use of ZPD in teacher education. However, the basic tenets of the socio-cultural theory are useful in guiding the exploration of teachers' strategies in developing accuracy and coherence in writing among PPSPs. The Socio-cultural Theory and social interaction concept in this study are used to discuss the findings based on the fact that learning is enhanced through interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Conceptual Reviews

This part presents the conceptual literature used in the study.

Writing and Mechanics of Forming Alphabets

Five stages are involved in developing pupils' writing skills, namely scribbling, forming resembling letters, writing recognisable letters, grouping letters into sounds and printing recognizable words and sentences with appropriate punctuation (Burke, 2010). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) points out five key instructional approaches, namely modelled writing, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing and independent writing. Generally, when children have the ability to trace, copy and

write lines, shapes and patterns, they are ready to learn how to form letters. Pupils need to identify letters in order to form them.

There are four components of letter recognition: 1) Letter recognition which is the ability to recognise the shape and size of the letter. 2) Letter naming which entails recognising that the shape of the letter is associated with a letter name. 3) Letter sound knowledge which is about determining what sound corresponds to the shape or name of the letter. 4) Letter writing which refers to the ability to trace or write the letter with a pen or pencil in accordance with its shape and direction (Dinehart, 2015). Children need to learn the shape of a letter, what the letter's name is, what the letter sounds like and how to write it.

Accuracy and Coherence in Writing

Accuracy refers to the state or ability of being perfect and free from mistakes. In this case, teachers are expected to enable STD I and II pupils be careful and correct as they struggle to write. It also entails pupils' exactness in forming alphabetical letters. Coherence is a state or situation in which all the parts or ideas fit together to form a united whole. In this case, the pupils are capacitated to connect letters and words to form sentences. In the context of this study, the teaching and learning of accuracy and coherence are combined together as the two skills may be taught and happen simultaneously.

Techniques Used in Teaching Writing Skills

Teaching Strategies may be conceptualised as a set of teaching behaviours effective in bringing about desired changes in pupils' behaviour such as abilities in writing. Literatures from outside and within Tanzania have pointed out various strategies used by teachers in the course of teaching writing skills.

In USA, Bilodeau (2012) researched on Hands-on Strategies to Assist Children in Letter Formation and Letter Recognition in Western New York and found that most of the hands-on activities that used different materials such as books and games made pupils enjoy and understand the lesson better. Books expose children to the letters of the alphabet and allow them to gain print knowledge; thus, teachers can read for them and slowly ask them to read on their own and see whether they manage to recognise the letters before they practise forming them. The use of technology helps children with letter formation and recognition in which some of the children use Ipad or LeapFrog when practising

writing letters (Bilodeau, 2012). In early childhood, teachers are encouraged to follow the lead of the pupils, allowing all children equal opportunities at learning success. Thus, the use of embedded instruction allows teachers to take that lead and use it for the betterment of pupils' growth and development. A study in Eastern Illinois found out that embedded instruction ensures that all pupils' unique learning needs are met based on observation, trial and practice in play activities (Titus, 2017). Based on the reviewed literature, writing cannot be taught in isolation but can go together with recognizing and reading.

Review of Empirical Literature

This part presents empirical literature used in the study.

Strategies in the Teaching of WS among PSPs

In Malaysia, Hosseini, Taghizadeh, Abedin and Naseri (2013) studied the Importance of Teachers' Classroom Practices in Developing Writing Skills in Malaysians' Primary Schools and found that guided writing is important in pupils' development of WS as teachers are able to provide the learning context for oral composition, class composition and dictations. In Sri Lanka, Nasir, Naqvi and Bhamani (2013) conducted an action research on enhancing pupils' creative writing skills. The study found that creative WS can be best achieved if teachers invest more time to the 1st and 2nd grade pupils in the teaching of writing through guided, shared writing and repetitions.

By using descriptive method and a sample of 20 teachers, Ito (2015) studied teachers' practices in enhancing writing skills among Japanese lower school pupils. Ito found that when teachers' practices acknowledge learners' interests, there are great impacts on learners' acquisition of WS. Bayraktar and Okvuran (2012) used the mixed approach to investigate the effects of drama activities on fifth-grade pupils' creative WS in the capital city of Turkey, Ankara. The results revealed that pupils wrote stories accurately as per series in the drama.

In Zambia, Chuunga (2013) studied teachers' practices in the teaching of reading and writing to learners with reading difficulties at lower primary school and revealed that differences in the backgrounds and realities of the teachers widened the gap between the 'slow and fast learners'. In Rwanda, Mutwarasibo (2014) found that pupils needed more writing practices under the teachers'

guidance. Teachers must in turn design many and varied exercises along the process writing model and then closely provide assistance, assess final work and give feedback to pupils.

In Tanzania, literature indicates that teachers' strategies such as provision of clear writing instructions is the cornerstone in enabling primary school pupils master WS and make pupils competent writers (Chacha & Zhong, 2013; David, 1991; Kumburu, 2011; Mmasa & Anney, 2016; Ngussa & Mjema, 2017 & Uwezo, 2016). In Indonesia, Suriyanti and Yaacob (2016) explored teachers' strategies in teaching descriptive writing. By employing qualitative approach and phenomenological design, they found that teachers' integrated writing and content area instructions maximised instructional time and gave pupils more writing practice.

Tandika (2016) carried out a qualitative phenomenological study on primary school teachers' practices in developing pupils with writing competency, focusing in Meatu and Itilima Districts as study locations. The author found that pupils' commitment to practice writing, ability to handle and use pen or pencil, and proper holding of the writing materials were essential in developing them into good writers. Anney, Mmasa and Ndunguru (2016) investigate literacy practices in Tanzanian classrooms in Tanga Region and found that teachers needed professional training in order to improve their teaching skills.

The reviewed literature has mostly dealt with teachers' practices in developing general writing competency and indicated that there are various practices used by teachers in teaching literacy skills and developing writing competency. Nevertheless, there has been little focus on how to develop particular WS such as forming alphabetical letters and developing accuracy and coherence in writing among PSPs. The effectiveness of strategies used by teachers has also not been addressed. Therefore, this study aimed at bridging these gaps since the previous researches did not study the same.

Methodology

This section presents the methodological approaches adopted in this study.

Design

Qualitative approach and case study design were used to establish the phenomenon in its context. Qualitative approach is capable of capturing in

depth information about the issues under investigation and the use of case study allows for knowledge to be connected to the context and theories to be connected to practice and tangible experience (Best and Khan, 2006; Cresswell, 2009; Cresswell, 2013; Gall; Gall and Borg, 2007 & Yin, 2009).

Population and Sampling

This study was conducted in eight PPSs of Namtumbo DC selected based on their not performing better in the Standard Four National Assessment (SFNA) in 2015 and 2016, as well as in Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) (Mwageni, 2015 & NECTA, 2016). It involved PPSs because cases related to poor acquisition of WS among PSPs have been highly reported there rather than private primary schools (HakiElimu, 2016). The study population constituted STD I & II teachers and pupils drawn from eight PPSs in three wards.

The study population was made up of 736 participants including 16 teachers (two from each school) and 720 STD I & II pupils purposefully sampled from eight (8) schools in Namtumbo District Council. Out of these were 45 pupils as standard class for STD I and II which made a sample of 90 pupils per school in the eight (8) schools. In due regards teachers were 12 female and four (4) male purposively sampled due to their potential to provide relevant information. Thus, qualities like teaching subjects, class level, working experience and gender were considered. It was impossible to balance gender since teachers were already placed to teach in respective classes. The selection of Wards and schools based on the fact that they performed least in the SFNA (NECTA, 2016).

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Classroom observation, focus group discussion (FGD), classroom continuous assessment (CCA) and documentary review were used to collect data since no one kind of evidence is sufficient on its own (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010).

During teaching and learning process, the researchers observed lessons and obtained information on the teaching strategies used by teachers. CCA was administered to explore pupils' writing abilities and difficulties so as to answer the question regarding the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers to teach writing. CCA included short stories and asking pupils to practise writing and forming specific letters. The threat of

the researchers conducting CCA was handled using a participant observer technique by building rapport with the informants. Leaving it to the regular classroom teacher was not encouraged to avoid biasness in capturing data. Therefore, doing this enabled the researchers to own the findings and the report.

FGDs were conducted in each school involving four (4) members, that is, two (2) STD I & II teachers as co-participants and the two (2) researchers for obtaining information related to the techniques used by teachers. Content analysis was used to analyse data as per research questions (Gall, et al, 2007).

The researchers critically reviewed STD I and II pupils' writing copy books to understand how effective were teachers' strategies in developing pupils' abilities in writing. The analysis of CCA and documents was qualitatively guided by the hermeneutic approach which bases on the meaning and interpretation of the texts, thus enabling researchers to interpret documents on the extent to which teachers' strategies were effective (Paterson & Higgs, 2005).

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In achieving credibility, triangulation of data methods was used. Dependability was maintained by keeping raw data in notebooks and audio records aided by photographs for pictorial evidence. Conformability was enhanced by establishing data and interpretation of the findings without basing on the researcher's interests but from the actual field data. The researchers tested the research tools in a pilot study and rectified them to tap accurate data as per the study objectives.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained research clearance from the University of Dodoma and sought permission from the Ruvuma Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) and Namtumbo District Executive Director (DED). Consent forms for teachers and pupils were developed and made available to the aforementioned participants before data collection. Pupils' consent was solicited through their teachers, all of whom had the right to refuse participation and pull out of the study at any time (Cresswell, 2007; Bailey, Hennink, & Hutter, 2011). Confidentiality was achieved by undertaking FGDs in places that participants felt comfortable and all data was treated as confidential. In the same scenario, the schools were given anonymous names: A, B, C, D, E,

F, G and H in the presentation of the findings (Ary et al., 2010).

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study.

Research Question 1: What are the strategies used by teachers to develop PPSPs' abilities in forming alphabetical letters?

Since forming alphabetical letters is only taught in STD I (URT, 2016) the researchers explored strategies and the extent to which STD I pupils were developed to form alphabetical letters. Two major aspects were observed, namely teaching of alphabetical letters (lower and uppercase) in print style and teaching of sentences with few words of consonant blends.

Teaching of Alphabetical Letters (Lower and Uppercase) in Print Style

Classroom observations revealed that STD I teachers used various strategies in teaching how to write alphabetical letters. Some teachers used scaffolding, brief explicit lessons, alphabetic order, songs and various teaching aids. Thus, pupils were taught the basics of writing, letter modelling and use of the writing principles. FGD with STD I teachers revealed that teachers were using brief explicit lessons where they were teaching the letter's name, sounds and written form. In this regard, a participant teacher from school C intimated that: "In teaching alphabetical letters, we help pupils to get knowledge of the alphabet names, sounds and

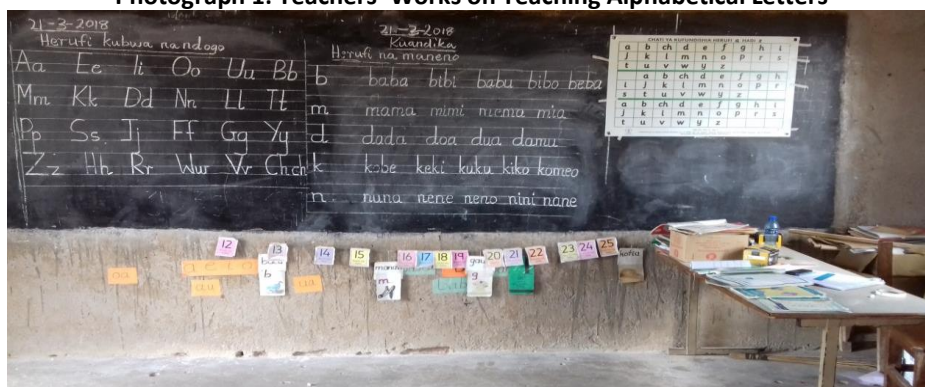
symbols of the alphabet also referred to as alphabetic knowledge. This is not only essential for pupils' learning to write but also to read" (FGD with teachers, 18th April, 2018).

Research findings emerging from the FGDs with teachers also indicated the use of alphabetic order in teaching of forming alphabetical letters as the following quote from one of the participants were noted:

We teach writing of alphabetical letters following alphabetic order beginning with letter A to Z. This helps pupils to memorise. Along with this, we use the traditional song A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z. We also use the Kiswhili... a, e, i, o, u song and the hiii ndio a,a,a, ina mkia mrefu, aaa...song for pupils to associate the letters and the sound (FGD with teachers, 17th April, 2018).

Despite the various strategies used by teachers in teaching the alphabetical letters to STD I pupils, classroom observation revealed that teachers' strategies were not successful to enable pupils form alphabetical letters adequately. In this regard, one of the teachers involved in the FGD from school A, shared: "We use various strategies such as repetitions, examples and provide learning activities that could reinforce pupils in understanding the lesson of writing lower and uppercase letters accurately. However, not all pupils master the writing of alphabetical letters" (FGD with teachers, 16th April, 2018).

Photograph 1: Teachers' Works on Teaching Alphabetical Letters



Furthermore, teachers in schools where teaching aids were available were using writing wall charts, letter cards and were encouraging pupils to ask questions and get them engaged in the learning process. Photograph 1 shows one of the teachers' works on teaching alphabetical letters to pupils.

The reviewed pupils' writing exercise books showed that some pupils had writing difficulties in writing alphabetical letters. It was noted that these difficulties based on writing lowercase letters such as 'r', 'w', 'g' and 'y'. Photograph 2 shows how STD I pupils had low abilities in forming lowercase letters

as they were struggling to write the letters 'r', 'w', 'g' and 'y' respectively.

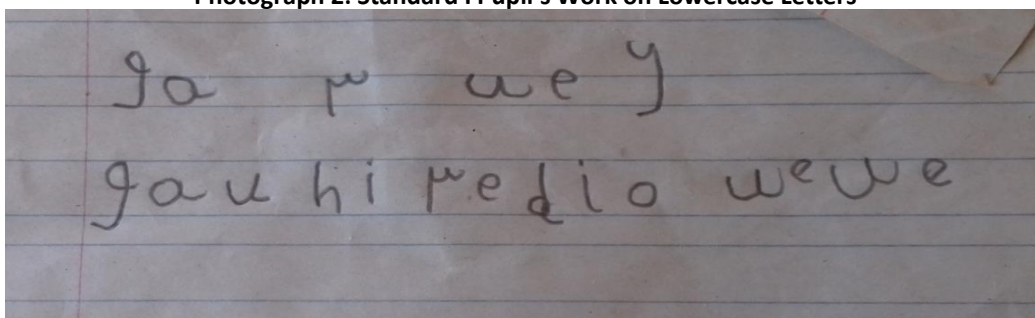
As observed in Photograph 2, the pupil's text shows not only the pupil's failure to write such lowercase letters but also the text does not show clearly which words were intended to be except for *wewe* (you) and *redio* (radio).

Teachers in collaboration with the researchers conducted a CCA to STD I pupils and found that nearly in all the observed classrooms, one (1) out of five (5) pupils had limited abilities in forming alphabetical letters. The CCA results imply that not

all pupils attained good achievement in forming alphabetical letters since some of them faced difficulties. On the other hand, the review of pupils' writing exercise books showed that teachers did not provide adequate writing exercises to their pupils.

These findings concur with those of Kumburu (2011) in Dar es Salaam who reports that Grade One children had problems in writing letters such as 'b', 'd', 'r', 'l', 'j', 'g', 's', 'ch', 'w' and 'y'. Similarly, Pembe (2017) points out that Grade One children in Tanzania experienced problems with the letter 'r', 'e', 'k', 'd', 'w', 'v' and 'a'.

Photograph 2: Standard I Pupil's Work on Lowercase Letters



Additionally, Ogano (2012) asserts that majority of the pupils write letters upside down or mirror, while others have many spelling mistakes. These findings imply that STD I pupils were not well developed with WS that could be used to form all of the alphabetical letters accurately. Moreover, the findings that teachers were not providing adequate writing exercises to pupils are in line with those of Chuunga (2013) who confirms that a larger number of teachers in the lower classes do not provide writing activities precipitating to pupils' writing difficulties such as spelling problems, poor spacing, mixed letter sizes and word omission. Likewise, Cooper (2007) and Carr (2013) agree that writing activities such as homework provided by teachers help lower class learners to become proficient writers. This is to say, provision of writing activities is crucial as it helps PPSPs to form and use alphabetical letters accurately.

According to the socio-cultural theory and as far as Standard I & II pupils interact with their teachers are concerned, the development of writing skills among the pupils is likely to be achieved as expected by the Education and Training Policy (URT, 1995 & URT, 2015). As reflected in Vygotsky's theory, writing teachers are expected to provide scaffolding to the pupils in developing writing skills. The findings of

this study have revealed similar results. Other strategies such as collaborative learning, discourse, modelling and scaffolding can be harnessed for supporting pupils' intellectual knowledge and skills for successful learning of writing skills. This is to say, teachers were trying their level best to use various strategies as proposed by theories such as the socio-cultural theory and pedagogical guides, yet some pupils faced difficulties something which suggests the existence of other bottlenecks such as shortage of teaching and learning aids as pointed out in the findings of this study. This observation also concurs with Tandika (2016) who found that insufficient supply of learning materials was one of the challenges that teachers were facing in developing writing competency among early grade learners.

Teaching of Sentences with Few Words of Consonant Blends

The observed STD I classes revealed that demonstration strategy was used in teaching writing sentences with few words of consonant blends. Furthermore, observation and documentary review indicated that asking pupils to copy notes written on the chalkboard was another strategy used. The pupils' writing exercise books showed that pupils copied teachers' notes written on the chalkboards. Some of the pupils were noted to have poor

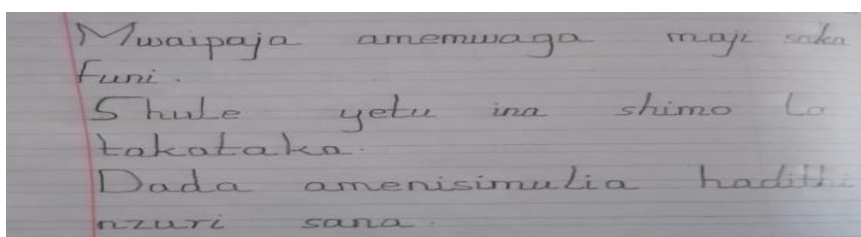
handwriting. This means that not all pupils were adequately and correctly capacitated to write sentences with few consonant blends to meet writing competencies outlined in the STD I syllabus through this particular strategy. The researchers and one of the STD I teachers conducted a CCA whereby pupils were asked to write the following sentences:

1. Mwaipaja amemwaga maji sakafuni (Mwaipaja has spilled out water on the floor).
2. Shule yetu ina shimo la takataka (Our school has a rubbish pit)
3. Dada amenisimulia hadithi nzuri sana (My sister has narrated to me a good story).

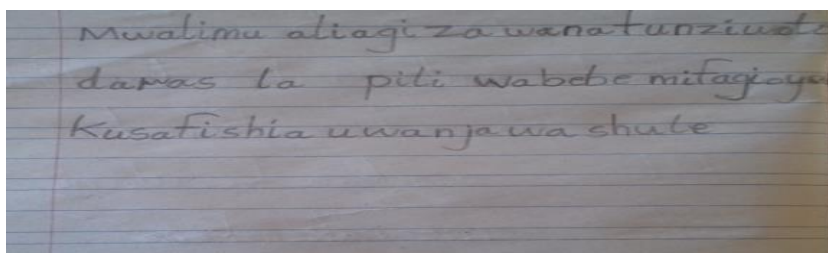
In the three Swahili sentences, only three (3) out of five (5) pupils wrote such sentences correctly. The remaining two experienced difficulties in writing blended words 'mwa', 'shi', 'nzu' and 'thi' appropriately. This reflects that not all pupils learnt gainfully the lessons of consonant blends. Photograph 3 shows pupils' work on CCA results.

Photograph 3 shows that a pupil had improved in writing blended words 'mwa', 'shi', 'nzu', and 'thi', in Kiswahili language while photograph 4 shows that a pupil had some difficulties in writing such blended words.

Photograph 1: Standard I Pupils' Works on CCA Results



Photograph 3: Standard I Pupils' Works on CCA Results



Some of the teachers' commitments in scaffolding pupils to master WS were greatly appreciated. Based on the classroom observations and review of pupils' writing exercise books, it was noted that teachers were attending classrooms as per school teaching timetable. However, nearly in all classrooms teachers were dominantly using 'talk and chalk' method and pupils remained as recipients of what their teachers lectured.

The findings that teachers' strategies in teaching pupils to write sentences with few words of consonant blends were less effective due to the use of 'talk and chalk' method reflect teachers' failure to incorporate teaching strategies that facilitate interaction with pupils. In this regard, Kumburu (2011) postulates that low achievements of WS among grade one children are caused by poor teaching methods. Furthermore, Ngussa and Mjema

(2017) argue that better teacher-related factors lead to pupils' mastery of WS.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies used by teachers to develop accuracy and coherence in writing among PPSPs?

Classroom observation, CCA, FGDs and documentary review were used to explore four subsequent aspects.

Teaching of Coherent and Comprehensible Short Stories

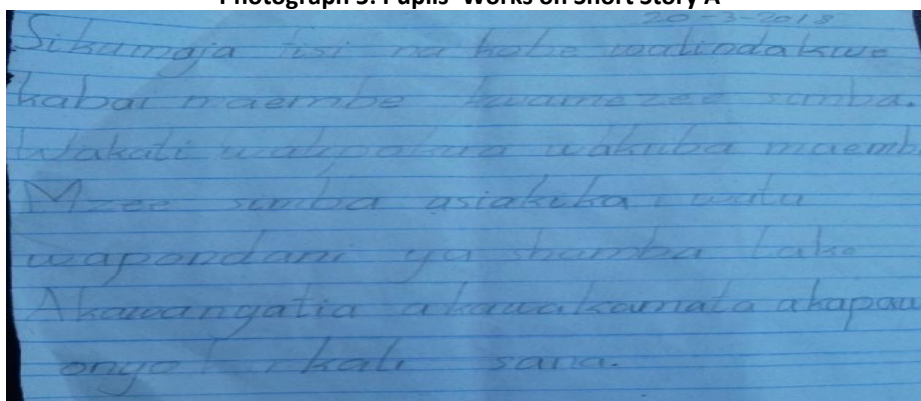
Classroom observations revealed that STD II teachers' lessons based on instructing pupils to write short sentences rather than developing pupils' abilities in writing coherent and comprehensible short stories.

Additionally, CCA revealed that nearly two (2) to three (3) out of five (5) pupils were not able to write a meaningful, coherent and comprehensible short story of a minimum of one to two paragraph(s). It was also noted that pupils' writing errors based on word spellings, sentence structure, illogical sequence of ideas and illegible handwriting. Another strategy used to teach writing of short stories was the use of learning groups. Although teachers encouraged learners to write coherent and comprehensible short stories in their learning groups, teachers were observed to have limited teaching strategies of using the group learning such as failure to balance the groups in terms of size,

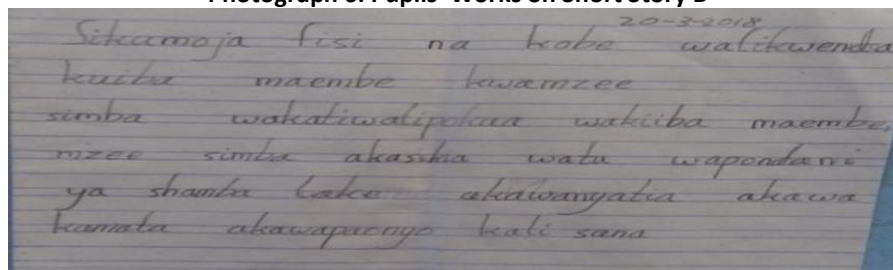
gender and abilities of learners, all of which made it difficult to enable pupils become proficient writers of coherent and comprehensible short stories. These findings concur with what Tandika (2016) who noted that the use of appropriate strategies for teaching and learning to write is crucial in enabling pupils with writing skills.

Photograph 5 and 6 show pupils' works A and B. In the pupil's work A the text with story was written with errors based on word spellings and illegible handwriting while pupils' work B shows a well-written story but with minimal spacing errors.

Photograph 5: Pupils' Works on Short Story A



Photograph 6: Pupils' Works on Short Story B



The written story in photograph 5 and 6 can be translated from Kiswahili to English as follows: One day Hyena and Tortoise went to steal mangoes in the Lion's farm. When they were stealing mangoes, the Lion realised that there were some people in his farm. So, the Lion stealthily stepped in the farm and caught them, then gave a tough warning.

Teaching of Coherent and Comprehensible Informational Texts

Classroom observations revealed that teachers' strategies were not being effectively implemented to enable STD II pupils write coherent and comprehensible informational texts. The review of

pupils' writing books postulated that majority of the pupils did not understand the difference between coherent and comprehensible short story versus coherent and comprehensible informational text. Thus, majority of them failed to write coherent and comprehensible informational text. For instance, CCA indicated that majority of the pupils struggled to write the subsequent informational texts with little success:

"Mwalimu aliagiza wanafunzi wote wa darasa la pili wabebe mifagio ya kusafishia uwanja wa shule."

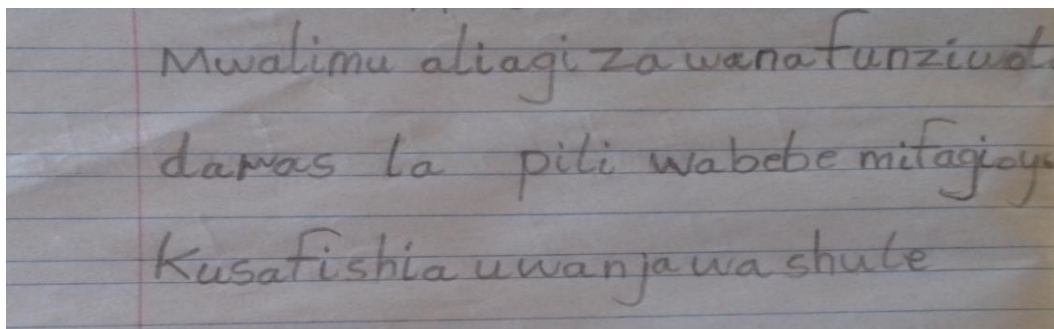
The CCA results indicated that only three out of five pupils managed to write such a sentence correctly as Photograph 7 and 8 reveal.

These findings imply that pupils were not developed with enough abilities to write coherent and comprehensible informational text.

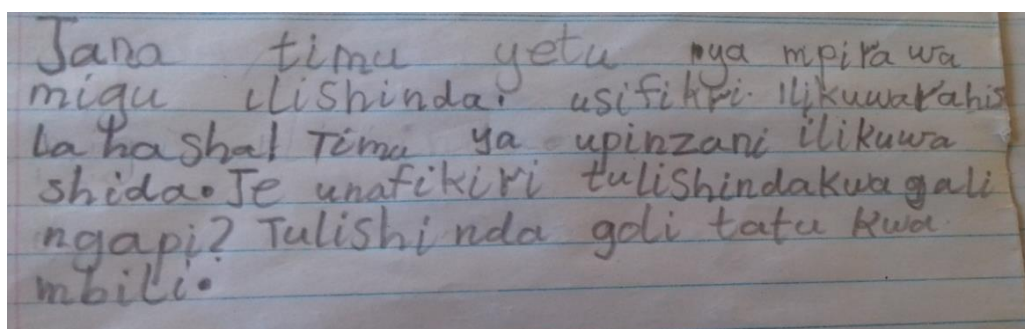
Teaching of Simple Coherent Letters in a Proper Form

Classroom observations depicted that STD I teachers used facilities and teaching aids to the extent of making STD II pupils write simple coherent letters in a proper form.

Photograph 7: One of the Standard II Pupils' Well Written Texts



Photograph 8: Pupils' Works with Poor Use of Punctuation Marks



Using the few available teaching facilities and teaching aids like toolkits, writing wall charts, letter cards, slates and postures with different images, teachers were able to use enough examples, repetitions and closely supported pupils to write a simple coherent letter in proper form.

The review of pupils' writing exercise books revealed pupils' good writing competences in writing simple coherent letters in proper form. CCA indicated that nearly all pupils who were asked to write simple letters like 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'e', 'f', 't', 'u', 'g', 'j', 'v' and 'm' managed to do so. Four (4) out of five (5) selected pupils wrote such letters in proper, accurate and coherent manner. In the same scenario, one of the participant teachers in school C had this to share in the FGD session:

Teachers use toolkits, writing wall charts, letter cards, slates and postures with different images to teach writing of simple coherent letters. In my STD II

class room, about 42 (93%) pupils moved to from STD I with strong competence of writing simple coherent letters in proper form. This indicates that teachers have been using teaching strategies in a diligent manner (FGD with teachers, 18th April, 2018).

While the findings of this study acknowledge a good job done by STD I teachers through proper application of teaching strategies, thus facilitating a transition to STD II with required competencies in writing simple coherent letters in proper form, the findings that STD II teachers' strategies were ineffective in enabling pupils to acquire necessary competences in writing coherent and comprehensible short stories, that most of them were not able to write one to two paragraph(s) of a coherent and comprehensible short story, reinforce what Anney et al. (2016) observed that pupils in the public primary lower classes could not write a Swahili story. Likewise, Uwezo (2014) supports that

among children in standard 3, fewer than one out of two were able to write a standard 2 level story in Kiswahili. In addition, Ngorosho (2011) reveals that 30% of the grade 2 children did not write any of the words in the test instrument correctly. The findings also comply with HakiElimu (2014) which found that one (1) out of four (4) pupils could not write a dictated textual paragraph in Kiswahili or English. Similarities of these findings imply that teachers' strategies were not implemented effectively.

Teaching of Four Basic Punctuation Marks in a Sentence

The findings showed that STD II teachers were using a talk-chalkboard strategy to teach punctuation marks. However, the strategy was not effective that most pupils had limited abilities in using them. The review of pupils' writing books and CCA revealed that pupils showed at least some good abilities in using full stop (.) and question mark (?) rather than comma (,) and exclamation mark (!). Story text from textbooks was another strategy in teaching the actual use of punctuation marks.

A Focus Group Discussion conducted to teachers revealed that teachers were using story texts from textbooks to teach pupils the use of punctuation marks. The following quote was deduced from one of the participant teachers from school D:

Standard One and Two teachers use texts from textbooks as a strategy to teach punctuation marks whereby pupils are asked to copy the texts in a way they learn to use punctuation marks. Despite the shortage of textbooks, teachers would prepare text extracts by photocopying the target parts they would wish to teach (FGD with teachers, 19th April, 2018).

The findings that teachers prepared text extracts in case of shortage of books to fit all pupils in the classroom implies the presence of innovations and deliberate measures by teachers to ensure that their pupils attain writing skills. This observation reinforces what Tandika (2016) found that some of the challenges encountered by teachers in the course of teaching writing skills were within the school management and teacher's capacity in addressing them.

Data emerging from CCA revealed that four (4) out of five (5) pupils managed to punctuate full stop (.); three (3) out of five (5) succeeded to punctuate the question mark (?); three (3) out of five (5) punctuated comma (,) adequately while only two (2)

out of five (5) pupils accurately punctuated the exclamation mark. Generally, only two (2) out of five (5) pupils managed to punctuate the whole text correctly. It was also found out that although three basic punctuation marks namely full stop (.), question marks (?) and exclamation mark (!) were taught in standard I, yet a good number of STD II pupils showed low abilities in using exclamation mark (!).

These findings are in akin to those by HakiElimu (2014) that many pupils' problems were associated with errors in punctuation, capitalization and spacing. With regard to that, Anney et al. (2016) noted that teachers' inadequate literacy teaching skills contributed to the problems of pupils graduating from primary schools without literacy skills.

Findings of this study imply that there is a big number of PPSPs experiencing writing difficulties relating to the use of four basic punctuation marks. Also, they imply that teachers' strategies were less effective in developing STD II pupils to use the punctuation marks. These findings are congruent with those by Msanjila (2005) who found that primary school pupils were encountering various punctuation problems that 51% of them were using punctuation marks inappropriately. Furthermore, Ogano (2012) and the Department for International Development [DFID] (2012) add that when teachers' roles are not effectively attained and less attention is given to pupils, it may lead to difficulties in making sentences, using punctuation marks, accepted vocabulary and paragraph organization. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers and pupils be committed, responsible and focused in implementing the teaching and learning practices. In particular, teachers should use more than one strategy in teaching writing skills relevantly and appropriately.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is concluded that teachers used various strategies to teach writing to Public Primary School Pupils in Namtumbo District. However, some of the strategies such as talk-chalkboard strategy were not effective to enhance pupils' mastery in writing.

On the basis of the study conclusions, there is a need for provision of INSET programs to standard I and II teachers which may increase their effectiveness in developing WS among PPSPs. Teachers should provide pupils with multisensory

lessons in order to improve letter recognition. Multisensory lessons can include visual inputs such as looking at the shape and size of the letters. Teachers should strengthen the use more interactive strategies such as group learning, repetition and use of teaching aids like writing wall charts, letter cards so as to strengthen child's cognitive, physical and social development for the better acquisition of writing skills.

As this study focused on writing skills only, another study can be carried out on reading or arithmetic skills. Since this study based on the strategies and effectiveness of teachers in developing pupils' WS specifically in Kiswahili language, another study can be conducted to incorporate English writing skills in other different classes.

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