

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

USING THE PROCESS APPROACH TO TEACH ESSAY WRITING

AT ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, HOHOE



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2017

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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FRANCIS COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**



**A Dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Languages,
submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education Winneba in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of the Master of Education in
Teaching English as a Second Language Degree**

NOVEMBER 2017

DECLARATION

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Afeku Benjamin Praise, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:.....



SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. PAUL NAAH YEMEH

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The successful completion of this project was motivated by a number of factors; the guidance, cooperation and support of some people. Though it is impossible for me to pay them back commensurably, I would like to register my appreciation for their contribution to this piece of work.

My profound gratitude also goes to my supervisor Dr. Paul Naah Yemeh for painstakingly taking time off his busy schedule to supervise my work. Dr, I am so grateful to you. May God continue to shower on you his favour and unflinching support to weather the storms of life. God richly bless you.

I also thank Dr. Rebecca Akpaglo-Nartey for her words of encouragement that have seen me through my darkest moments. I am grateful to you.

Finally, I wish to thank all my lecturers at the Department of Applied linguistics, friends and all who in diverse ways helped to make this project work see the light of day. I will always be grateful to you all.

However, I accept responsibility for any imperfection in the work.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father in Christ, Snr. Prophet TB Joshua.



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ABSTRACT

Despite the constant efforts in developing English Education in Ghana, it is still obvious students at almost all the levels display poor skills in composition. In view of this, the researcher decided to find out the effective ways that teachers of the English language could use to help students at the colleges of education level to overcome their writing difficulties. Among the tools used were test, observation, interview and the design took the form of pre-intervention, intervention and post intervention.

Findings revealed the following deficiencies in students' essays: lack of substantial content, poor organization, poor expression and very horrible mechanical accuracy. Besides, teachers adopted only the traditional method in teaching essay writing. Also teachers who handle large classes hardly give written assignments to their students. These were some of the problems identified. The researcher recommended that teachers of English language should eschew laziness and give equal attention to essay writing just like the other aspects. This will encourage the students to study and practise the descriptive essay writing.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The English language is the language across the curriculum, not only because of its influence in both the local and the international scene in terms of its social value but also because it is the language used for all forms of examinations in Ghana and most African countries. However students' performance in the English language at the College of Education level in the country is no pleasant sight to behold. This has been a bother to the stakeholders who, in an effort to find a lasting solution to the problem have initiated a number of uncommon resourcefulness in designing the most appropriate methods for the teaching and learning of the English language but no significant impact has since been made.

A critical study of the problem at stake has revealed that the core of the challenge under reference is students' inability to write good essays probably because of their inability to grasp the fundamental rules that bind all forms of writing at their formative stages of development. Writing is regarded as the most demanding of the four basic language skills and therefore needs a special attention if the individual is to make an impact in academics.

1.1 Background to the Study

A Brief Profile of St. Francis College of Education

St. Francis College of Education was the first catholic institution established in the Lower Volta Vicariate in 1908 by the German SCD missionaries on a parcel of land donated by Bla, Kpeme, and Abansi. It was then called St. Augustine's College.

It was reopened the third time on 14th February, 1947 and named St. Francis' College with St. Francis Xavier as the Patron Saint.

The College is now under the Episcopal jurisdiction of Ho Diocese headed by His Lordship Most Rev. Francis Kofi Anani Lodonu.

The founding fathers were Rev. Fr. Bucking, Rev. Fr. Feldmann, and Most Rev. Fr. Joseph Gerald Holland.

The college was started at a place called "Kpodziga" and was then nicknamed "Gborto College", Tsiveme College etc.

The three communities: Bla, Kpeme, and Abansi of the Gbi Traditional Area gave out the initial land of 63 acres. This was extended to 91 acres in 1975.

The college was established as an all-male college with an initial intake of 30 students. It became a co-educational institution in 1954 when 30 women were admitted.

The Catholic Church, the community, and the college have co-existed in a friendly atmosphere over the years. The college assists the community in terms of making the college vehicles available to convey people to places when the need arises and the church regularly visits the college on Patron Saints Day and Missions sending occasions.

The college has had good academic records despite all odds. In the maiden Diploma in Basic Education results (2007), FRANCO topped all colleges by placing first on the list of about thirty eight public Colleges of Education in the country.

The products of the college can be found in all sectors of the Ghanaian and world economy despite the fact that the primary objective of the college is to train teachers. There are politicians, legal personnel, civil servants, professors, lecturers, bankers, accountants, public servants, private businessmen and women, and security service personnel and many other cultivated pundits who contribute immensely not only to their communities but to the nation at large.

Being a mission school, St Francis College of Education community ensures a sound moral value which pulsates with excellent academic work by the collective effort of the board of directors of the school, the chiefs and elders of the Gbi traditional council, the teaching and the non-teaching staff, parents as well as the students themselves.

As a result, the college is one of the most attractive teacher training facilities in the Volta Region of Ghana. It has over the years admitted students from all walks of life: rich and poor, those from less endowed and well-endowed schools as well as those from divergent religious backgrounds such as traditionalists, Christians and Muslims. Subsequently, there is always a greater effort by the tutors and the authorities of the school who have always displayed uncommon resourcefulness and erudite professionalism in their bid to make the teaching and learning experience in the school place the product of the institution among the best in the country.

Because of the deficiencies in the attainment of good English language skills which most of the students exhibit in the college, it has always been the practice by both tutors and the college administration to find innovative ways to improve the students' knowledge in English in order for them to become excellent teachers at the basic level of the educational system.

A brief survey of the abilities of students of St. Francis College of Education indicated that most of them were exposed to product writing in the various secondary schools they attended, leading to obvious shortfalls in their ability to compose a meaningful piece. As a result, it has become necessary to introduce them to process writing in order to update their knowledge in Essay writing.

This realization has been evident in the results of the students in the English language papers administered and examined by Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast. Over the years the performances in the subject by the students have been average relative to other courses in the curriculum. This notwithstanding, the performance of St Francis College of Education in the English language examinations has been among the best in the country for six consecutive years as of June 2013. (Franco Graduation brochure 2013;16)

Despite all the theoretical advances made in the teaching of composition in the English language, most teachers, against the laid down principle rely solely on the technique of product writing as a preferred means of impacting the writing skills to their students in most of the pre-tertiary institutions in the country. Consequently, this has led to a dramatic fall in quality in most of the essays written by the products of the educational system in Ghana.

Although product writing is a useful tool in the act of essay writing, it has some peculiar limitations which make it debilitating on the acquisition of essay writing skills by young students. A more efficient technique instead of product writing is the process writing approach. The unique advantages in the use of the process approach are so immense that it holds the future for the act of good composition teaching and learning in the educational system of the country.

Process writing in essence is the application of a series of carefully planned strategies designed to bring the best out of students in terms of generating a useful content, an effective organization, a technically accurate expression in the essays written by students and mechanically accurate grammar used by the students in the essays that they write. With the process writing approach which is also called the cyclical approach to teaching writing, students are systematically taken through a number of stages to prepare them adequately for the writing task ahead. By extension, the process writing unlike product writing demands that students are taken through the following stages: pre-writing, writing, rewriting, editing, and the proof-reading stage. The pre-writing stage or the preparation stage of the process writing situation is the first stage of the writing task where both the teacher and the learners plan the essay by way of gathering information and materials for the essay. The writing stage otherwise known as the incubation stage is the stage at which the students in question are allowed some time to reflect on what to write. The writing or execution/illumination stage is the stage at which the students under the guidance of the teacher are allowed to do the first drafting. At the editing stage the student checks and rechecks to ensure that errors and petty mistakes are corrected and the whole writing modified so that the final draft is done for proof-reading. The process is represented as follows: (a) Pre-writing or Preparation stage, (b) Writing or execution or Illumination stage, (c) Rewriting stage, (d) Editing stage, and (e) Proofreading stage. To a very large extent, the process writing approach unlike the product writing approach is bound to achieve results because writing is seen as a messy recursive process in which writers move back and forth, from one stage to another; planning, drafting, rewriting, revising, stopping to reflect and writing again. Product writing approach on the other hand which is regarded as grammar and syntax oriented in nature or traditional method of

teaching writing assumes quite a different dimension as compared with the process writing approach. With this approach, the teacher gives the topic, spells out his rules in terms of word limit, clarity of thought and logical presentation of ideas and assigns to the students the task to write on the topic and crowns it all with the marking and correction of mistakes and errors. The product writing is represented by the structure below; Topic, explanation, assignment, marking and correction of mistakes and errors.

Given the varied background of students admitted to St Francis College of Education, it has become necessary to formulate a useful strategy in order to equip those students who might not have been exposed to the process writing technique prior to their college admission. This policy will also protect those students who have had the experience of going through the process writing culture from relapsing into the product writing tradition of their colleagues since the process writing approach by all considerations ensures a greater degree of substantive information, clarity of ideas, coherence, authentic voice, vigorous writing, economy and grammatically acceptable writing which are the core characteristics of good and excellent writing. The process writing policy which is not much in evidence in Franco currently is urgently needed more than ever because of the increasing need to maintain if not to improve the standard of the English language among the student population

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Writing is considered the most important component of all the other skills (listening, speaking and reading) in every language learning situation largely because most of the academic exercises are conducted through writing. Most examinations are taken in the English language and this underpins the fact that one needs to be very

competent in writing especially in the English language if one is to succeed in any academic endeavour not only because the English language is considered the language across the curriculum but also because about 95% of the examinations we sit for take the written form. It is also true that even at the Basic Examination Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) levels, the chunk of the mark is awarded to the essay type questions and this shows the importance of writing in the life of every student. It is also a general assertion by many that a student's excellent performance in the other subjects in the academic curriculum is determined by their ability to write very good essays

Owing to the deficiencies in the composition skills in essay writing among a large number of the students admitted into St. Francis College of Education, the tutors of the English language in the college are expected to put in effective strategies to bring the knowledge of the students in line with national standards. Most of these students were chiefly taught essay writing such as the descriptive writing, narrative essay writing and the others through the product writing means in their various Senior Secondary Schools. Eventually the majority of them lack the competence they would have acquired with the exposure to process writing. Also, the chief examiner's yearly report on the performance of first year students in the Colleges of Education nationwide clearly indicates shortfalls in terms of content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy in the type of composition students write at the College of Education level.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the actual problems associated with students' inability to write good essays. It also intends to use the process approach to essay writing to help students to write good essays.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of this study

1. Why are students of St. Francis' College of Education unable to write good essays?
2. How can the students be assisted to overcome their challenges?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of the study will therefore be of immense benefit to the following in the following specific ways: Students of St Francis College of Education because it will enable them to write better essays. The teachers will also equip themselves with the best strategy in teaching descriptive essays. In addition, policy makers and researchers will benefit greatly from the result of the study.

1.6 Limitation

The sporting activities at the hall, college and regional level coupled with the various fieldtrips outside the college and the numerous mass sessions through which the students have to go in the school ultimately limited the ideal time frame designed for the study.

In addition, the original sample size of 52 students was affected when 12 students left the college on account of receiving admission into the country's Universities or the Nurses training schools leaving only 40 students.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Process Writing: It is the systematic steps that a teacher takes to nudge students into the essay writing task. It involves stages such as collecting ideas, assembling the ideas by way of writing them down, reviewing the ideas and making some changes to make the ideas clearer, paying attention to details such as punctuation, grammar and creating copies of their work to be shared with their colleagues. According to Lynn (2006: 211) is the systematic stages through which learners are taken by the teacher in his quest to prepare and nudge them into the writing task. Stated differently, the process writing has to do with all the steps and levels that the teacher takes learners through in preparing them for the formal writing task. In this case, both the learner and the teacher have roles to play in preparing for the writing task ahead.

On the other hand product writing unlike process writing is the type of writing technique where the teacher gives just a fair idea about the topic on which to write and guides the students to do the writing. According to Winsor (2012), product writing is the writing process which sees a teacher domineering the teaching and learning process. What Winsor seems to be saying is that, the teacher, in the product writing experience gives the topic, spells out his rules, instructs them to do the writing, marks the essays and scores marks and guides them to correct students' mistakes.

Clear Writing: According to Hairston (1993) is a piece of writing where the intended reader or decoder is able to read at an appreciable pace and extract the intended meaning.

Unified Writing: It is the art of connecting all the parts or branches of a piece of writing to the ‘master plan’ the central most idea, or the thesis statement. Hairston (1993) and Ngozika (2007)

Economical Writing: A good writer will not like to waste his readers’ time by being verbose. According to Lannon (2002:402) in his book the Writing Process – A Concise Rhetoric, a piece of writing is said to be economical when all excess words are cut off and clusters are done away with, giving way to only the salient points thereby arousing and sustaining the interest of the reader.

Grammatically Acceptable Writing: According to Hairston, (1993) grammatically acceptable writing is the type of writing which observes Standard English usage. By Standard English, we mean the type of English that we encounter in books, newspapers, and business documents or the type that we hear on radio and the television and also in public speeches.

Vigorous Writing: According Hairston (1993) a piece of writing is said to be vigorous and strong if the writer uses words that show the reader the actual thing that is happening. Some of these words are; active verbs, striking metaphor, concrete examples which make the language emotive.

Writing with Authentic Voice: With authentic writing, Hairston (1993) posits that of any piece of writing, the decoder senses the presence of the writer behind what he or she is reading. Lannon (2002; 401) also asserts that with authentic voice in writing, the writer’s image or character comes through the writing and makes the reader feel that a real person is trying to communicate ideas and information.

1.8 Organization of the Rest of the Study

The dissertation is on the application of the process writing technique to teach writing with a particular emphasis on descriptive essay writing in St Francis' College of Education. The study was organized into five distinct chapters with the first chapter dealing with the introduction to the study; while Chapter two reviews related literature; Chapter three, methodology of the study; Chapter four, discussion of results; while Chapter five focuses on the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Chapter one, as the introductory chapter, comprises the overview, background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms, and organization of the rest of the study.

Chapter two consists of the review of related literature. Literature relevant to the study has been systematically reviewed in order to identify the knowledge gaps relating to the topic of study which must be filled.

Chapter three on the other hand discusses the methodology of the study and comprises the following: research design, population, and sample size, instruments of data collection, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure.

Next is chapter four which concentrates on data analysis. Finally chapter five serves as the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the review of related literature pertaining to students' difficulties in the field of essay writing. Principally, it would attempt to establish the nature of the problem and explore for solutions best suited to deal with the problem in all the relevant available literature connected to the current study. In the interest of clarity, the Literature review will be organized under some appropriate sub-headings.

Kwabia, (2006) maintains that Literature Review is a statement that explains inter-relationship in a phenomenon. It can be knowledge, or an idea derived from an existing one and serve as a guide for doing fieldwork. It brings to light when or where an even occurred, what caused it or how it occurred, redefines research objective and redirects the data collection process. This is a plan or drawing that shows how the research could be done whether intensively or extensively.

The difficulties students encounter in their essay writing need a thorough examination so that the nature and source of the problems can be identified and possible solutions found. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the views of some authorities on the subject matter to justify the need for the investigation.

2.1 Meaning of Essay

An essay can loosely be explained as the act of composing an effective write up which is cast into the form of either a descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative essay. Because of the technicalities involved in determining what an

essay is, some scholars in the field have come out with some authoritative definitions to explain the term.

All the specialist definitions under examination appeared to have largely agreed on some key features of an essay. The formulation of sentences; the logical stringing of sentences together; the establishment of well defined paragraphs; and the linking of paragraphs together to form a meaningful composition which is capable of appearing in a publication. According to Emory (1995), “An essay is a series of related paragraphs that examine a single topic from the writer’s point of view and it appears in newspapers, magazines, professional journals and so forth”. Although his definition provides a fair idea of what an essay is, Emory has not provided much of the essential details of what an essay should look like but chose to emphasize documents where they are likely to be published. Earlier, Fiffen (1970) had provided a more simplified explanation of an essay as “an act of composing a piece of extended writing usually in prose form on a specific topic.”, accordingly,” It therefore has something in being with human kind”. Prior to these earlier definitions, Merian (1960) appeared to have given a more extensive definition of the term. She explained an essay as “an act of composing especially arrangement of words to form sentences, paragraphs etc. In a sense, she considered an essay as all the “written works; all the books, articles, journals etc on a particular subject”. In contrast with the earlier definitions which have been somewhat specific, Hornby (1974), has provided a more general perspective on the definition of the term. He has defined composition as; an act of composing something for example, a piece of music or writing typed for printing or a short piece of non-fictional writing done as a school or college exercise.

With this definition, Hornby had widened the scope of what can be described as an essay, since he had included other things other than just a written text. Medygal

Little (1996) who has provided another dimension to the explanation of the term defines composition in the writer's choice, grammar and composition as "a piece of writing that develops ideas or expands a topic in a coherent and unified manner. It is clear from Little's definition that a good essay must be logical in its organization by having a chronological or spatial order. Although the other authorities have expressed this point implicitly, the clarity in Little's definition has served as a useful complement to the earlier explanations. David Holdkom et al (1980), has concurred with all the points expressed by the other experts and has made some interesting points which dwelled on the full import of writing. According to him, writing means putting ideas together to form a clear picture of what one wants to say. In effect, he has seen writing as aiding learning which ultimately leads to the discovery of new ideas and the seeing of new relationships. Essay writing has therefore served in real life term as the development of abilities to explain particular conditions, sending messages keeping records of past events and making one's feelings or opinions known to others.

However, of all the authorities considered, Ngozika M, (2007) has provided the most thought provoking definition. She has described composition writing as a personal act; an expression of self. According to her, essay writing draws on intuition as well as on reasoning, sensation, emotion, facts and memory. A writer's experience, educational background, exposure, composure, co-ordination, or lack of it could be revealed by his writing. Ngozika's explanation therefore has presented an essay as a piece of writing which should reveal a very complex experience on the part of the writer.

Drawing from the foregoing analysis, it is evident that the definitions as stated by the scholars emphasize the act of writing an essay with all its inherent features. In

general, essay writing has been established by these experts as an act of putting words together in order to drum home a message or specific information which could either be oral or written.

2.2 Types of Essays

There are different types of essays because every type of writing has a unique structure and style. We might write to inform, narrate, describe, classify, compare and contrast or argue. These are put in four main groups known as descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative essays. Be that as it may, it is significant to note that in spite of the differences in form, style or structure, the basic composition has a fixed shape which is introduction, body and conclusion and before we discuss the types of essays in the succeeding lines, we need to understand the stages of a basic essay.

According to Lannon (2002) an introduction to every form of writing attracts the reader, announces the view point of the writer and previews what will follow and that all good introductions invite people in. In terms of the body of an essay, Lannon (2002) asserts that the body of an essay explains and supports the view point and achieves unity by remaining focused. It achieves coherence by carrying a line of thinking from sentence to sentence in a logical order. According to Lannon, bodies of an essay come in different sizes depending on how much readers need and expect.

Lannon (2002) describes conclusion as the part of the essay that sums up the meaning or points at other related meanings to be explored. Good conclusions give the readers a clear perspective on what they have just read.

2.3 Descriptive Essays;

Descriptive essays require the candidate to give a vivid account of the physical look / appearance of a person or a thing. To have a clear description, the candidate must have a very clear picture of what he wants to describe because the clearer the picture the more reliable the description.

According to Mac-Ceun & Winker (1995: 168) “a description is word picture.’ It is the attempt to use words to depict some person, place, feeling, animal, event or thing”. It may be as exotic as a description of a faraway palace or as ordinary as a poster describing a lost dog. And for all the almost infinite variety that writers occasionally try to describe, there are still some basic techniques that work in nearly all descriptions; a vivid description supports a dominant impression with specific details. The dominant impression of a description is its central and unifying theme.

Clouse B (1992), states in her book entitled, ‘The student writer’ that description evokes images and impressions. It can renew a readers’ appreciation of familiar from the fresh perspective. In writing, descriptive writing completes with painting, film and especially photography as a means of transmitting a mental image or expression of the world around or inside us.

However, description in writing also allows for metaphor, for using words in distinctive combinations to create that image we could never see in a painting, film or paragraph. In addition, descriptive writing depicts vividness; accumulate unique features or details, combines vitality to create a context. It is also important to encourage students to develop vocabulary that will enhance their descriptive art. Classroom activities such as role play, picture reading miming and writing games can be used to achieve this feat.

2.4 Narrative Essay;

A narrative essay is simply a type of writing that relates sequence of events whether factual or fictional. Moduekwe (2007) & Adams (2008) state that narration simply means giving a sequential account of an event. According to Mc-Graw- Hill (2001; 152) narrative essay or writing is the type that tells a story. Adam (2001) also states that narrative composition requires the candidate to relate events or incidents in a systematic order as an eye-witness would. He explains it further as an act of storytelling with a wide experience in the reading of short stories, novels etc. The narrative which dwells on imagination must follow the order of events and systematically move the reader to believe that what the story is saying is true. One fact about narrative essay is that it is writing from that third person point of view.

2.5 Expository Writing;

To expose means to bring to light a hidden secret or fact. Expository writing according to Ngozika (2007; 165) is probably the most common and the most useful kind of writing. It is concerned with explaining or informing readers about something. Expository writing does one of the following', expresses an opinion, informs or educate others, persuades or entertains others. It invites the reader to enter the real world and meet actual people. According to McGraw-Hill (2001;202) expository writing informs and explains topical issues.

2.6 Argumentative/ Persuasive Writing;

As the name aptly implies, argumentative essays are the types of argumentation that seeks to woo an opponent to one's view point. Adam(2001) asserts that argumentative essays require the candidate to present a subject with the view of persuading his readers to agree with his line of thinking. The essence of the above

type of writing is argument and it covers all forms of debate. It is therefore clear from the foregoing that all the four variety of composition do basically the same thing which is giving a piece of information.

2.7 Challenges in Essay Writing

The act of essay writing is a difficult task which requires significant experience on the part of the learner. The complexities and subtleties involved in putting together a well structured essay makes it a formidable exercise even to an accomplished writer. Obviously, imparting the skill to learners automatically brings to the fore many challenges which confront all teachers during the teaching and learning process. The teaching of essay writing is therefore a very problematic endeavour. Many factors account for this. The first challenge is that many students find essay writing boring. According to Tsadidey (1993) one major observation that has been made of students on practice in basic schools is that their approaches to the teaching of composition follow a certain regular pattern and this makes their lesson ineffective and boring.

Tsadidey did not only attack the approach that is mostly used by teachers on practice but also the choice of composition topics. Teachers, in appropriate choice of topics often lead to organizational challenges. Their inability to nudge their students into the various stages of the composition lesson and their failure to break composition topics into meaningful units often leads to ineffective writing by students. This was one of the weaknesses Tsadidey (1993) has attacked.

Again, Tsadidey (1993) complained about teachers. According to him, some of the books used as references by teachers contribute to students' dislike for composition lessons. Examples of such books are most of the English language

textbooks written by people who are not distinguished scholars of the English language. He has been of the view that composition topics should task the intellect and imagination of students. To him, the ultimate aim of a composition course is to produce scholars who are quite conversant with the basic structure of the English language so as to be able to communicate effectively in writing with other users of the English language. Concerning the factors that determine success in composition writing, this is what Tsadidey (1993:37) has to say, “Composition writing’ heavily depends on a good sense of imagination and this should be considered the most important requirement for success in composition”. Again, Westrup (2003: 98) also suggests that ideas and how orderly they are presented in any discourse provides the basis for a good composition.

There are other problems that hamper students’ ability in writing good and grammatically acceptable compositions. Christensen (1990), on the other hand, identifies some of these problems when he says; we who preside over composition courses have refused to see that there is a problem. Writing undoubtedly is considered one of the most sophisticated, most complex and most difficult of the skills necessary for a child’s language development. It can be acknowledged that acquisition of the writing skills depends on the degree of competence that has been attained at the first three stages of pre-writing, writing and the post writing. Most students at College of Education level seem not to have mastered material for these stages.

Another problem observed is that some people find it difficult to put their ideas across in a meaningful context. For example Warriar (1986) has stated that most students have a many ideas about a subject but are unable to communicate what they know. He observes that students write without paying attention to the following; mechanical accuracy, organization, expression and content.

Besides, the fact that writing plays a key role in our lives as human beings cannot be denied. It is regarded as the most important of the four basic language skills that the individual needs. Fredericks (2002), has stated categorically that if we accept the premise that writing is a life-long craft to be developed and nurtured, then we also need to accept the fact that students need to write daily and be provided with enough time and opportunity to develop the craft of their writing.

Another challenge is that writing is hardly ever taught, instead, students are given topics to write on and when it is taught, it is as a product and not as a process. According to Maduekwe N, (2007; 161) teachers test rather than train students in writing.

Another challenge is that, because of their large numbers, students are not given essay writing assignments. The result of this is that, students are demoralized since they lack the requisite competences with which to take off. The textbooks are yet another challenge. Most of the textbooks in the various institutions are concerned with the final product rather than the process involved in getting to the product. This problem is worsened according Moduekwe N, (2007) by the wishy washy manner in which teachers present the writing lessons. Moduekwe N, (2007) has asserted that most teachers of English rely on unmotivated topics which they discuss briefly orally and require of them to write within a limited period.

Finally, lack of motivation is one of the serious factors that hamper successful writing. Most teachers of English do not motivate their students. Motivation is key because writing is a skill which needs to be taught, developed and supported, consolidated and recycled.

2.8 Approaches to the Teaching of Essay Writing

There are a number of suggested approaches to teaching composition writing at all the levels in our academic pursuit. Some of them are discussed below.

2.8.1 The Process Approach

The word ‘process’ according to the *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* is a series of actions that one takes in order to achieve a result. Process Writing, in the layman’s sense is a series of activities that the learner is taken through by the teacher in order to help them write good and acceptable essays. The process writing goes through stages like pre-writing, drafting/writing, revising, editing, publishing, and in some cases, reflection.

Arguably, the process approach, as one of the approaches employed in teaching essay writing at all levels, is the most efficient technique when it comes to impacting the skill because of the systematic application of detail in the process. In his book, *Paragraph Development*, Arnaude (2001) defined writing as a step by step sequence which tells how something is made or done. This type of writing is referred to as academic writing which is generally accepted by the world of academic. This is the type of writing that is used by students in the tertiary institutions to write their project work, thesis and term papers. There is the need to teach process writing to pre-tertiary students in Ghana due to the numerous advantages attached to it. In process writing there are three basic stages in which ideas are put together.

These three stages are:

- i. Pre-Writing activities
- ii. Drafting activities
- iii. Post Writing activities

2.8.2 The Product Approach

The product approach is built on presenting, practising and producing. It is also widely used by teachers of English to teach composition writing. With the product approach, the teacher gives the topic, spells out his rules in terms of word limit and duration, assigns them the task of writing on the topic and finally takes the scripts for marking. He then corrects students' errors and mistakes and guides them to write the essay again. Attention is given to vocabulary, punctuation, concord, syntax, as well as unity and coherence. The main idea in product writing is that, it makes a choice of comparable writing task for students to use the structure independently. The structure below gives a clearer picture of product approach to writing.

1. Topic
2. Explanation
3. Assignment
4. Marking and correction.



As regards the product writing approach, many scholars have expressed their opinion about it. For instance, Wood, (1994), has described the product approach to teaching composition writing as unsatisfactory. In his description of the classroom situation where the product approach is used, he says “no one is teaching them how to marshal their thoughts effectively and put them into written words. No one watches their writing or asks them about their composing strategies.

Wood has further stated that teachers provide little or no instruction; no attention is paid to the process of writing. He has therefore argued that the major problem that impedes writing is inadequate preparation of students before they are asked to write. A critical analysis of Wood's definition of product writing has revealed

inconsistencies. What I think Wood is saying is that, unlike the process approach, the product approach does not go through preparatory stages and that basically, the teacher does nothing to help the students prepare for the writing task. However, I think his conclusion is too harsh because, regardless of the approach one decides to use, there is always an element of preparation before the actual writing is done. I also think that, at the pre-writing stage, the teacher who is using the product approach guides the students to assemble points through a series of brain-storming exercise.

Besides, the teacher guides through discussions and explanations as to how to organize their composition in terms of writing the introduction, the body and the conclusion. It is for this and other reasons that I disagree with Wood's assertion that teachers provide little or no instruction and pay no attention to the process of writing.

2.8.3 Importance of the Process Approach

After many experimental studies into the psychological aspect of writing, Barciter & Scardamtia (2000) have made a number of recommendations that are built around possibilities of shared writing.

Students need a supportive and congenial writing environment, but will also benefit from experiencing the struggles that are integral part of developing writing skills.

Students may also benefit from using various "facilitating" techniques to help them through initial stages of acquiring more complex processes (eg. listing words, points that may be made, the wording of final sentence etc) in advance of tackling the full text.

The success of shared writing from the above discussion is likely to reflect the teacher's skill in using dialogue to provide a "scaffolded" understanding of what is

involved. Asante, Koranteng & Yemeh (1999) have stated that using the process approach is an innovative way of developing students' interest in composition writing, besides it helps students to identify and classify in their minds the main points and the most suitable order in which to deal with them. It involves teaching them to arrange their thoughts effectively and put into written words. Here, no one watches or asks them about their composing plans.

Looking at the two approaches, the process approach is more reliable in achieving results than the product approach. According to Winsor & Crawford (2011:58) in their book, *Emergency Literacy and Beginning Reading and Writing, (Teacher's Guide)* much is known about children's reading and the writing process itself and about teaching students to read and write. They have maintained that recent decades of research have offered educators clear descriptions of the writing process along with guidelines to help teachers offer students a research-based instruction. Reading Ghana, a collaborative effort between Ghana Book Trust-a Ghanaian NGO whose aim is to promote the love for reading and writing and supporting schools and communities by distributing books and establishing libraries, and CODE-a Canadian NGO supporting development through education for over fifty (50) years had designed a teacher education initiative to create and support a thinking literate Ghana by engaging children through reading and writing and inviting them to think and improve their lives.

The writing process is complex. It begins with the writer's ideas and moves through multiple stages until a finished piece of writing is ready to be shared with others. After collecting ideas, the next stage is writing down the ideas. When writers have their ideas written, they review them and make some changes to make their ideas clearer. Making these changes is referred to as revising. Following the revising of

ideas, writers pay particular attention to the details of punctuation, spellings, and grammar. This is the stage called editing stage. After editing, writers then create a copy of their work which they can share with others. Sharing writing is referred to as publishing or going public. The sixth and the final stage which is uncommon though, is the reflection stage. Not all scholars of writing consider the sixth stage. It is a time when after writers have published their work, they sit back to think about the whole write-up. It is recommended that teachers of young writers include the sixth stage in their process because it is the stage where writers think critically about their work and determine areas that have been perfectly done and those that may need improvement as well as things that they still need to learn. Winsor & Crawford (2012;59) have stated that teachers can encourage their learners to think in a particular way that will build in them the zeal for writing by asking such questions as; what are you proud of about your writing? And what will you like to do better when given the second chance to write the same essay? Responses by students will serve as a guide to the teacher to gather more information to plan future instruction. The following chart by Winsor & Crawford (2012; 59) describe the six stages of the process writing at the basic level especially.

Table 1.1: Stages of the Writing Process

Stage 1 Pre-Writing – gathering information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students think about what to write and collect information. Brainstorming is one way to collect information. The KWL can be used. The KWL means (K-what the child already knows, W-what he wants to know, L-what he has learnt.) • Outlining and making graphic organizers are other strategies to get writing started.
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students write down their ideas and may stop

Drafting – writing ideas	<p>occasionally to read or think about their topics. They can talk to the teacher or a peer about an aspect of their writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• By this stage, it is important that writers are clear about their audience and purpose of writing.• Writing should focus on ideas rather than concern for correct spelling, punctuation, or grammar.
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At this stage students add, delete, substitute or rearrange materials to improve a text.• Teachers help students engage in revising thereby helping them see where changes are needed.
Revising – making writing better by adding, deleting, or rearranging ideas or words	
Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus is on the mechanical errors – writers attend to spelling, punctuation, and grammar• A strategy that helps writers improve their editing skills is the editing checklist.
Editing – focusing on the spelling, punctuation, and grammar	
Stage 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This stage in the writing process is when writers produce a final piece to share with an audience.• Students are given opportunities to read their writing aloud to others.• Writing may be displayed in the classroom or school.• Teachers can allow students to enter writing contests or other ways of sharing their writing.
Publishing – producing a final copy to share with others	
Stage 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students identify what aspects of their writing they have done well and are proud of.• Students identify some writing skills they still need to learn.
Reflection – thinking as a writer	

Teachers can encourage young writers to think this way by talking with them about their writing and asking such questions as 'what are you proud of about your writing? And 'what would you like to do better as a writer?'. The responses from students will give the teachers enough information to be used to plan future instructions.

It is also true that instructional material play a vital role in the writing of the learner. Harris (1982) says that teachers should use appropriate instructional materials to guide students to write models essays on the chalkboard stressing that this should be done before asking students to write on their own.

To add to the above, one other way that we can help a struggling writer is to prepare them orally at the pre-writing stage for the writing task. Willies (1991:157), also has stated that, 'you can help students to produce good writing by adequate oral presentation before writing the tasks'. In addition, Langer & Allington in Holdzkom's book research within reach oral and written communication (1980), have posited that if the goal of your instruction is approved writing, then instruction must take place in the context of real writing.

Also worthy of note is the procedure in which we take our learners in our bid to introduce them to formal writing. As mentioned earlier most of the procedures go through such stages as pre-writing, drafting, revising editing, and publishing. For example, Clouse, B (1986) believes that learning to write well means developing effective writing procedures. This includes the generating of ideas that is brainstorming at the pre-writing stage, drafting or assembling the ideas at the drafting stage, revising and organizing the draft at the revision stage, editing and proof reading at the editing stage and going public with the final work at the publishing stage.

Another view which seems similar to the above is expressed by Robert (1985), another renowned writer who has said that writing can be done effectively by emphasizing the purpose and audience of writing. He has elaborated on how to write better essays. In his book entitled the writer's composition, he has asserted that "writing is more rewarding experience if one thinks carefully about the topic at the pre-writing stage before beginning to write". He has been of the view that too many students simply go through writing experience without thinking first and as a result, their writing lacks careful development and clear organization. To him, pre-writing which includes thinking, researching and reading should be done before the first draft is made at the drafting stage and this he says allows the writer to find a focus for the topic.

In order to succeed in all the above suggested points, we need to answer some pertinent questions that bother on the topic under reference. Robert (1985:62) has put forward some questions which any writer worth his sort should consider before embarking on any writing task. They are as follows;

- a. What am I going to write about? (topic)
- b. What is my purpose of writing? (purpose)
- c. Who will be reading my essay? (audience)

Clearly, we can deduce from the questions that they all fall at the pre-writing stage of the writing process. He has explained that after the pre-writing is completed, the first draft should be done by getting the ideas obtained rapidly on paper without worrying about mechanical errors. This is done at the drafting stage. This draft is set aside and later revised at the revision stage. When one then comes back to the first draft, fresh ideas come up and then one can look at it from the

perspective of a critical reader. The final draft is then made as clean and direct and as free from errors as one can make it. Robert's ideas are quite helpful because for every piece of writing, there is a targeted audience and the purpose should be made clear to him. Therefore, taking your time to go through the steps can make one achieve his or her aim for writing.

Again, Interowed and Murray (1985), also focus on ways of achieving a good introduction, body and conclusion of an essay in a sequence of paragraphs for easy reading. Writing a good introduction paragraph is to present the basic idea that will be discussed as well as to interest the reader. With the body of essay, they identify that it is the main part of the paper. The purpose of the body is to develop the topic stated in the introduction by presenting information and illustrations about it. The body paragraph should follow "logical organization" whereby there are an ordering of thoughts and ideas that make sense. Ideally, the paragraph is introduced by a topic sentence. The topic sentence is the sentence that contains the controlling idea in the paragraph. The topic sentence is followed by the major and the minor support sentences respectively. It should also include "sufficient number of illustrations and examples" which may include details, examples, facts, figures and reasons to support and explain the topic by the use of connectives.

Lastly, the body should have a 'unified composition'. This is where each idea presented in each paragraph relates to the topic or the master plan. Even though each paragraph develops a different aspect of the topic, all the paragraphs in the end, deal with the same basic idea. Finally, we have the conclusion of the essay. The purpose of the conclusion, according to them (Winterowd and Murray) is to bring the reader back to the main idea of the paper by restating it in a new way.

A good conclusion also gives the reader, a sense of completion of having come to the end of a discussion. Different techniques used by writers in writing conclusion include briefly summarizing the main points or referring to the topic. Sometimes, a topic can be concluded with an interesting quotation.

Again, composition or essay writing can end on a personal note or statement of opinion. It is however important to note that the conclusion is not the place to add new ideas. This is very important as a clear organization of ideas into paragraphs can help as these ideas will be logically arranged for easy reading and understanding. Ur (1996) has stated that tasks given in textbooks to stimulate writing do not always do so effectively. She has said that some tasks may be interesting-sounding like personal stories, narratives and some may be uninteresting sounding like an exercise checking if learners have read the book. But regardless of the type of task given, the teacher must be sure that it is given in such a way that it will be interesting and motivating to learners.

Further, Farris (1985) has suggested that the teacher should also consciously control what the learners write by writing relevant frames, a substitution table and vocabulary on the chalk-board. This would be used as the basis for oral composition. To ignore this, is to commit a grievous fault. It is essential for them to have thorough preparation for all written composition work. This preparation should always be carried out orally although, in later years, it can be done independently from books. Without careful oral preparation, written composition cannot play useful role in learning of a new language.

That is not all; Gurray (1970) has noticed that one major problem that inhibits composition writing is the inadequate preparation of students before they are asked to

write. He has suggested that a teacher should first use a good oral drill on the topic with the students and then help to build a tentative table of vocabulary on the board. When this is done, students should be able to build paragraphs in chronological order when students are asked to write.

Again, Mc,mahan & Day (1988;193) have suggested step-by-step, the processes one has to go through in writing a paper. These two scholars have said that, writing is not as neat and tidy as we make it sound. The first draft should be written. They emphasize that good writing involves multiples drafts. This means writing and then re-writing and sometimes rewriting even more. This diligent revising is what makes the difference between good and merely passable or poor writing. The editing stage then follows closely and then finally the process of proof reading where careless mistakes in grammar and punctuations are corrected. With all said and done, it is important to note that the approach to be adopted by teachers in teaching essay/composition should not be left out. Some authorities have outlined some approaches to the teaching of composition.

On the issue of unity and coherence in students' essays, some authorities have made juicy suggestions. Naa Afarley Sackeyfio (1994), has argued that the visual rule-giving approach to essay writing must be adopted. It is better to actively involve the learner in the learning process by setting out specimen of essay before him and then breaking them down under various aspects of a composition; its context, its organization, its expression, its total impression and its impact. Sackeyfio has said that by pointing out the strengths of each specimen and identifying the means by which this strength appeared in the samples, the teacher shall be guiding the learner to emulate them in their writing to ensure error free essays.

Sekyi-Baidoo (2002), has also explained that paragraphing involves a unit of discourse. This unit and others should fit within the framework of a large unit and can thus together constitute a single unit of communication which could be a letter, an article, a chapter and many others. Paragraphing, thus refers also to dividing up a larger unit like a chapter and later into smaller units of discourse. A paragraph must have an overall common focus which introduces and develops the main idea of the whole write up.

Mifflin (1992) has stated that whether you write a single paragraph or multiple paragraph essays, paragraphs are the most important unit of organization. He has further explained that each has its own clear score and purpose sentence and concluding sentence.

A topic sentence states the limited topic of the paragraph and indicates the focusing idea and the main point that you want to talk about in your topic. These topic sentences give the overview of what you have stated. Supporting sentences explain or develop what you have stated in the topic sentence. Your concluding sentence brings the paragraph to an end, coming back to the idea introduced in the topic sentence.

The choice of words also contributes to the writing of good essays. According to Yemeh, (2007:2), the capital weapon and tools of the student is his range of vocabulary

The tools of a student comprise a wide range of words very well known to him. The student must be stocked with rich vocabulary to enable him execute freshness and creativity throughout his essay. What this means is that since words are used to compose and essay, the student becomes deficient in composition writing if he

lacks the necessary register with which to write. Vocabulary is therefore seen as a weapon for success in writing.

According to Coyle (1997), “there are three main punctuation marks that are necessary to grasp’. These are: the full stop, the comma and the apostrophe. These punctuations are equivalent to stopping and changing of gear”. Punctuation marks show when to stop, pause or rest a little and when to pay special attention to a particular part of a sentence.

However, Fredericks (1997: 98), has raised some form of alarm. For him, writing is not that smooth and easy. He has said “writing is not all that tidy, real writing gets messy. Instead, writing is recursive process that involves multiple stages at any one time”.

Significantly, all the views expressed by all the above seasoned authorities are key because they have added to the import of the process writing concept.

2.9 Conclusion

In spite of all that the authorities have revealed in this chapter, it is clear that many teachers are not well informed as to the right approach to use in addressing the problem of essay writing in the Colleges of Education in the country. Besides, looking at the comprehensive input made by these authorities, I did not find, in their reviewed work, sufficient information that addressed this challenge of students’ inability to write good essays. It is to address this challenge that the researcher has decided to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides information on how the study was conducted by way of giving a systematic explanation on the following aspects of the methodology; the research design, the population, the sample and sampling procedure, the instruments, the administration of the instruments, validity and reliability of instruments, the data collection procedure and data analysis.

3.1 The Research Design

A research design is a master plan or blueprint which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analysed. It provides the procedural outline for the conduct of any given investigation, Nworgu, (1991).

The action research design was used in conducting the research.

An Action Research Design is a cyclical, dynamic and collaborative process in which people address issues affecting their lives (Lewin, 1938, cited in Striger, 2000). Through cycles, participants sought a change in practices leading to improvement in their lives. Despite some limitations of the general applications of its results, the design is the most appropriate for the study which seeks to improve the essay writing skills of students of St. Francis College of Education by the use of the process approach to writing.

The action research design is relevant to the current study owing to the following reasons:

1. It would trace the cause of students' inability to write good essays and devise means of helping them
2. It would aim at improving practices and behaviours of students in the college by changing them.
3. In this particular study, it would also assist to think, reflect and theorize about the practices, behaviours and situations when it comes to good composition writing by the students in the college.
4. For ethical reasons it would consider the needs of the least powerful (student) while it includes those affected by the problem.

The design will enable participants to share their perspective with others.

The use of this design would lead to the clarity of understanding of the different perspectives and experiences.

It will test emerging understanding in the field of process writing by using them as a basis for changing practices or constructing new ones.

It would work for the development /building of the learning community of St Francis College of Education with respect to the art of good composition writing.

Steps in this type of research include;

- Attempting to identify the problem
- Designing a possible solution
- Trying to execute the solution
- Evaluating and modifying the ideas conceived
- Practising in the light of the evaluation

The researcher considered this research design the most appropriate to help him find out why students perform poorly in composition lessons. This research design was adopted because it created more restructured solution to the problem under reference.

Despite the advantages that come with the use of the action research design, the applicability of its findings is limited to St. Francis College.

3.2 Gaining Entry to the Research Site

St Francis College of Education which was the school understudied is located in the heart of the Hohoe Municipality. Its strategic location allows it to rely on both southern and northern parts of the Volta Region of Ghana as its catchment areas. The majority of the teachings staff of the college were met and the idea of using the first year students of the college and the tutors of English in the college for the study was sold to them which they readily bought without bargaining probably because of the unmitigated problem of poor performance in English language among the student of the various Colleges of Education in the country. The purpose of the research and the objectives were also read to them. The researcher was encourage to go ahead and conduct the study since the objectives set had a great potential of rhying with the fortunes of not only the teachers of the English language and the students but also the whole St. Francis College of Education community in particular.

The selected class for the project also met with the researcher where they were given orientation on what to expect and how to conduct themselves within the period. He sought their cooperation since they were by far the core beneficiaries of the project. The purpose and the objectives were read to them. A permission notice was sent to the principal of the college and the dean of student's affairs because the

selected student were supposed to be exempted from most of the extra campus activities which could serve as a potential threat to the success of the project. The researcher designed questionnaires based on the objectives of finding out the problems that militated against student's capability in writing good essays as well as what should be done to address it and they were given to both the teachers and students. The first part of the questionnaires sought to demand personal details of the teachers and the student who were the respondents. The researcher gave the respondents five days to respond to the questionnaires which they did accordingly.

3.3 Population of the Study

Population is a group of individuals that have one or more characteristic in common which is of interest to the researcher (Best & Kahn, 2006). Population for the study is the entire St. Francis College of Education community made up of both students and tutors totalling 912. Out of this total figure of 912, 862 are students while the remaining 50 are tutors. However the target population for the study is the entire 335 first year students and the six tutors of English in the college totalling 341 people. Target population is the actual group that the researcher intends to use for a project.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study was made up of 46 participants. This sample size consists of 40 first year students and all the 6 tutors of English in the college. The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting all the participants for the study because it allowed all the 40 students with the severest form of the problem along with all the six tutors of English to be selected.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The researcher decided to use the most convenient tools among the options for the purpose of the study. He used interviews, observations, questionnaires as well as tests to carry out or drive home the target of the study. Interviews were conducted to help identify the students' problems in the subject. The students were also closely observed during their essay writing, specifically, descriptive composition lessons to find out their performance. Questionnaires were administered to identify other problems that the students could not talk about. Lastly, tests were administered to the target group to find out whether the researcher's objectives had been successfully achieved.

3.5.1 Interview

Interview is a section during which an interviewee responds orally to a set of questions which are designed to clarify an issue. This instrument was employed in collecting data on research questions one and two. The main features of an interview are as follows:

- (a) As to whether it is purposeful
- (b) Whether it is conversational
- (c) And also as to whether it answers research questions.

Face –to-face interviews were some of the techniques used in collecting data. All the six (6) teachers of the English language unit of the languages department who teach composition lessons in the college under reference were duly interviewed. This was to enable the researcher find out the following facts for immediate action: what they have been teaching, how they approach essay writing lessons, the reference books they use, and the participation and performance level of the students during

essay writing lessons as well as the actual causes of students' inability to write good essays and what should be done in their opinion to address the challenge. The researcher also interviewed some selected students. This was to find out students' views on the teaching of essay writing as well as factors that militate against the teaching and learning of the topic under reference in St. Francis College of Education.

3.5.2 Observation

Observation is the primary technique of collecting data on nonverbal behaviours. It involves getting to the field, participants, organization etc. to collect data based on their behaviour. It is often referred to as fieldwork because it takes place in the field, Alhasan (2006).

The observation technique was employed to find out the type of interaction that goes on among the students and the teachers. The researcher observed students as a participant observer by sitting among them when the teacher was teaching. Nworgu (1991), states that "participant observation studies are superior since investigations are able to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurs and are able to make appropriate notes about its significant features". To this end, both the teacher and students' attitudes towards the teaching and learning of descriptive essay writing lessons were closely monitored and in almost all the cases, the value remained unchanged; the product approach was the order of the day. Teachers were also observed to find out how they used the spoken language to communicate with the students in question and among themselves.

Again, the researcher observed a number of English lessons that were taught by the subject teachers in his bid to determine the number of assignments given to students and indeed how soon those assignments were marked and the results

communicated to the students in order for them to realize their mistakes and correct them

3.5.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a data collection process where participants answer questions or respond to statements in writing. A questionnaire is used when factual information is desired, Alhasan (2006). In his view, Nworgu (1991), feels that questionnaires are printed forms that ask the same questions of all individuals in the sample and for which respondents record their answers in verbal or written form. Alhasan (2006) also posits that “questionnaire is a systematically prepared form deliberately designed through the compilation of questions to elicit responses from respondents or research in formats for the purpose of collecting data”.

The researcher used questionnaire as instrument because he considered it less time consuming. Besides, with the questionnaire technique, data could be collected from a larger group of students and teachers at the same time, and thereby making the questionnaire as instrument seemed reliable.

The questionnaires, which were of two kinds; one for the teachers and the other one for the students demanded “Yes” or “No” responses from the two groups of respondents. The questionnaires enquired of attitude of students and teachers towards the teaching and learning of essay writing and their problems as regards this aspect of the English language. All questionnaires for both teachers and the students were retrieved.

3.5.4 Test

Test is the most extensive instrument used during the study. This instrument is a device for measuring a sample behavior. It takes the form of tasks or series of tasks with the view to obtaining information on an individual's behaviour in a specific area of study or an area of investigation. This instrument was very significant to the study because it was used in order to gather first-hand information on problems relating to essay writing among the students.

3.6 Data Collection Protocol

The majority of the teaching staff of the college were met and the idea of using the first year students of the college and the tutors of English in the college for the study was sold to them which they readily bought without bargaining probably because of the unmitigated problem of poor performance in English language among the students of the various Colleges of Education in the country. The purpose of the research and the objectives were also read to them. The researcher was encouraged to go ahead and conduct the study since the objectives set had a great potential of rhyming with the fortunes of not only the teachers of the English language and the students but also the whole St. Francis College of Education community in particular.

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The researcher designed questionnaires based on the objectives of finding out the problems that militated against students' capability in writing good essays as well as what should be done to address it and they were given to both the teachers and students. The first part of the questionnaires sought to demand personal details of the teachers and the students who were the respondents. The researcher gave the respondents five days to respond to the questionnaires which they did accordingly.

3.7 Administration of the Instruments

The researcher himself administered the test and the questionnaire instruments, and carried out the interview and the observation sessions with the aim of ensuring efficiency in the process. By so doing the researcher was able to obtain first-hand information on the issues at stake. The students' questionnaires were administered to the respondents in their classrooms on school days during break time.

This was the most suitable time for the researcher to meet and distribute the questionnaires to them. They were directed to respond appropriately to every question and in a timely fashion.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected for the study by the use of the two instruments 'interview' and 'test'. An interview guide which was validated by the supervisor was used to collect data on research questions 1 & 2 within the first week. (see Appendix A) In addition, two separate text items were administered before and after a series of interventions. In the first place, a pre-test was administered (see Appendix B) in order to ascertain students' difficulties in writing essays. Afterwards, a series of

interventions in the form of composition lessons taught using the process writing approach were carried out over a period of six weeks (see Appendix C, D and E).

After the interventions, a post-test was conducted (See Appendix F) to establish students' competence in writing essays. Both tests were marked using a marking scheme validated by the supervisor, (see appendix G).

3.8.1 Pre-Intervention

To start with, the researcher conducted a Pre-Test on the students (See Appendix C and D) in order to ascertain their writing ability. After these tests had been administered, he collected the scripts and marked. After marking, the researcher saw that the students had some peculiar challenges regarding how to introduce the essays, how to organize their thoughts and assemble ideas and facts as well as copious examples and illustrations for the essay they write. Besides, how to link the various branches of the essay to the master-plan by the use of connectives and linking words, and also how to conclude their essay to give a signal to the reader that the essay has come to an end.

Again, the researcher noticed with much concern that most of the problems that students had in their pursuit to write a good essay had to do with how to write with substantial content, clarity, economy, unity, vigour and authentic voice. These vital tips for good writing were totally lacking in the essay they wrote. They also seemed unaware of the bond among the thesis statement, the topic sentence, major support sentence and the minor support sentence. The researcher then guided the students to use the process method to write an introduction to a selected topic and do peer editing among themselves. They were asked to critique one another's work by writing both the strong and the weak points about the essays they wrote. The

researcher used the students' classroom for this exercise and ensured learner-friendly environment to ignite the zeal and interest in the students. This procedure helped them to speak freely and participate actively during the teaching and learning process.

3.8.2 Intervention Strategies

In order to help improve students' skills in essay writing, the researcher exhibited uncommon resourcefulness to see the end of students' writing problems by taking the following measures; First and foremost, he organized what looked like a mini-seminar and briefed the students on the importance of the English language to their survival as students. He adopted the eclectic method of teaching essay writing where more methods and techniques such as Product writing, Process writing, Guided composition writing, Controlled composition writing and Free composition writing were used to help the students understand and have interest in the subject. He however settled down on the Process approach and nudged the students into the realities of the process approach which in his view was the best method of teaching any form of essay writing. He printed some handouts which discussed few approaches to writing the introductory paragraphs. He gave them an orientation on what the thesis statement was, as well as the major, the minor and the other support sentences were.

He then educated them on the significance of the introductory paragraph, saying it was the most important part of the essay since it determines the tone and format of the essay. He also guided them to practice how to write an introductory paragraph and indicate the thesis statement. The researcher conducted a cumulative review to test students' level of achievement in the lesson taught. After marking the tests given them, he discussed their problems with them and conducted a remediation for the struggling writers.

Details of the entire Intervention Process

The Writing Process Approach:

The Writing Process Approach is like building a house: extensive planning has to go into the project before the actual building starts and then equipment and materials need to be obtained, the building takes place in small steps with lots of planning, 'looking back' and reviewing, in order to continue more effectively.

Finally, when the house is finished, an inspector has to come and check it again before people move in. The 'whole house' has been produced by initially visualising it as 'a whole' and then building it up from small parts and pieces slowly and step-by step until 'the whole house' is a reality. The above mentioned is elicited from students. The lecturer asks questions about how a house is built. Students have to discuss this issue among themselves. They also think of different kinds of houses and the reasons for having different kinds of houses and the implications it has on the kind of planning, materials, and the like. Students are divided into groups. Each group gets a large blank poster and colour marker pens.

Each group gets a different assignment with regard to different types of buildings: police station, soccer stadium, hospital, school, conventional brick house, traditional house in the village, grocery shop, petrol station, etc. Students then have to think of how to construct the building they chose, what materials are needed, who the client is, how the building process develops and what rules and regulations need to be adhered to. They have to write their thinking about these issues down, and finally draw a picture of the building. Then two group members report to the class who give their feedback.

As inspiration and motivation, the lecturer could bring pictures of houses to show students that some issues are fundamental principles and present in all types of houses, whereas other aspects depend on the purpose of the house, the taste of the owner, the skill of the architect and builder, etc. The lecturer explains to students the relationship between building a house and constructing an essay. The Writing Process (WP) is so called because writing is not a once-off activity. It takes time to write a good essay and requires many skills. The word 'PROCESS' in the title can be compared to processes of Biology, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics topics. In Biology you learn about photosynthesis - a process, in Physics you conduct experiments - a process, in Maths you have to go through a number of steps and calculations before you get the correct answer - each is a process. There is a distinct relationship between writing in English and other subjects (Biology, Physics, Chemistry and a lesser extent Maths).

Cross-curricular teaching and learning is encouraged and very often Science and Technology texts from journals or magazines or even texts from the Biology or Physics textbooks are used in the English lesson as input. Mathematics- and Chemistry texts are 'under-represented' at this stage. Usually only texts which describe the biographies of famous people or the history in those fields are used.

The stages of the Writing Process require a number of thinking, reading and writing skills. These skills will be used in an interactive, communicative way to deal with the writing of essays and assignments and not always in the same order. The process approach advocates a number of steps, but these steps do not ALL have to be followed slavishly and not all in the same order. The steps are presented in a specific order in this workbook and once you have been acquainted to all the steps you can choose which steps are suitable for your individual writing preferences

For the student:

Firstly, when you read the topic of the essay/assignment, you have to think about/analyse the topic. First step of Process Approach is to divide the topic into three parts which are called the General Focus, Specific Focus and Comment. After the analysis of the topic you will already have looked at two issues critically, which will help you in generating ideas.

The next step then is to generate ideas. You do that in many different ways. Firstly, you can use your own background knowledge of the topic. You have to record your ideas and this can also be done in a number of ways, for instance: free-writing c) spider diagram/mind map. Once you have recorded your own background knowledge, you may want to add information, which you can gather from texts. There are different sources of texts: textbooks, internet, magazines, journals, newspapers. After you located your information, you would want to record it. There are different ways of doing that. Usually the reading skill is involved, as well as different strategies to show your understanding of the text, e.g. notes, summaries, paraphrases. In this case the information used must be referenced and you will have to write a bibliography (in an academic notes). The next step is to make sure that you know the audience you are writing for as well as the purpose of your writing, e.g. who is reading the text and why are you writing this text? Do you want to inform the students about something, explain a new concept to your colleagues, argue a point of view? All these factors determine the kind of information and the style you use, it will also have an impact on the organization of your ideas. Then you have to write a paragraph plan or organize your ideas. That means you have to synthesize or put together your background knowledge and the information you found in text(s) in a systematic way. In this part, you should also try to formulate a preliminary topic sentence and

just jot down your supporting ideas for each topic sentence. You could show your plan to your friend or lecturer to check the relevance and the organization of ideas. Now you should be ready to write your first draft. You usually use your topic sentences as first sentences of different paragraphs. Add your supporting sentences which give you more information about the idea in the topic sentence. Use the criteria provided by the lecturer to guide your writing.

Once you have finished writing your first draft, you read your essay/assignment again and ask yourself questions about your essay. These questions will focus you on your topic, content, structure, the style, the purpose, audience and linguistic aspects. You make the necessary amendments and then give your essay to a friend to read. Your friend will have the same criteria as you had when you checked your essay yourself. Your lecturer might also help with some editing and revising. You might want to add cohesion words (and, but, however, therefore, in addition...) and reference pronouns (it, she, he, they.) to make the flow of your essay more effective. The second-last step is to write the final draft. After writing the final draft, check your essay again for clarity in meaning, good structure, useful vocabulary, sentence length, punctuation, etc. Correct any errors. Once you are satisfied that you gave your best and the essay is your ultimate attempt, you can hand it in.

3.8.3 Post Intervention

To crown the whole interaction process, the researcher conducted a post intervention-test (See Appendix D), after he had duly convinced himself of having done all he needed to do with all the intervention strategies. The responses students gave and the significant improvement made in the exercise was a reflection of a job well done and the researcher had the cause to be proud firstly of the approach and

secondly of his tenacious determination to improve the lots of the students of St. Francis' College of Education in acquiring good essay writing skills. Almost all the students did a marvellous work and their essays were a delight to read. The implication then is that if teachers of the English Language could do their work well, and ingenuity, the writing plight our students in the various Colleges of Education in the country would see a significant improvement because the students used the process approach in writing and this time, their essays were better organized than what they had done previously. After the observation and marking, the researcher shared in the explanation Glencoe (2000) gave which suggest that if the learner is effectively taken through the five stages as explained above properly, he or she will develop appropriate skills in writing.

The strategies and methods used by the researcher to enhance good writing skills of the students of St. Francis College of Education were refreshing and effective. Indeed, the study has a positive impact on the composition writing abilities of the students of the school.

3.9 Data Analysis

Inferential statistics was used for data analysis. Percentages were calculated and used to describe data gathered by the use of test and interview. Tables were used to illustrate and arranged data. Both research questions 1 & 2 were analysed using percentages. The researcher at this point collected the completed forms from both the students and the tutors. He categorized the questionnaires for easy analysis and presentation. The researcher did the sorting and categorization of the responses given by the respondents.

The data collected were also coded, described, analyzed statistically and interpreted appropriately. Most of the data were so categorical that, it became imperative for the researcher to use percentages as the main statistical technique for the data analysis. Figures were calculated to the nearest whole numbers in most cases to facilitate the description of the results.

Conclusion

Finally, it was unequivocal that because the process approach was faithfully followed and the various stages of the process writing techniques observed, the methodology component of the research had not been only successful but also impressive.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of data obtained through the administration of tests and interview in order to establish the effectiveness of the process approach to teaching essay writing to the students of St Francis' College of Education. Responses obtained from the use of these instruments were compared and contrasted making similarities, differences as well as advantages and disadvantages distinguishable. Percentages on responses to relevant issues have duly been calculated. Recommendations on the subsequent chapter were made in the light of the documented findings of this chapter.

4.1 Why are students of St. Francis College of Education unable to write good essays?

4.2 To answer the first research question, two main research instruments were used to gather data on students' inability to write good essays

The data gathered through the use of test and pre-test level points to students' deficiency in writing essays.

As has been stated in the third chapter of this study, four teachers of the English language department of the college participated in the research by serving as the respondents to the interview. The observation however was that some of the tutors of the English language did not know that the approaches they adopt in teaching the students to write essays could have a negative or positive effect on their students' output. The interview conducted for the teachers to find out the causes of students inability to write good essays has revealed that two out of the four tutors interviewed

representing fifty percent (50%) of the teacher-sample did not consider the fact that their approach to teaching essay writing could either be detrimental or beneficial to student composition writing fortunes. This was brought to light when the researcher collected the responses from the four tutors who responded to the interview on what they consider the actual cause of students' inability to write good essays. Among the responses from the tutors were;

- a. Students did not have any strong background in composition writing at their basic levels so they committed countless avoidable grammatical errors and mistakes such as wrong punctuations, capitalization and others.
- b. The majority of them had substituted creative writing for text-messaging and what-supping.
- c. Students lacked the appropriate register to use in writing their compositions.
- d. They failed to practise speaking the English language and instead resorted to speaking either Pidgin English or vernacular.
- e. As boisterous and impressionistic as they were students sometimes tend to be proud and therefore considered their tutors less enlightened than they are which ultimately affect their performance in composition writing because they ignore the mistakes that tutor point out to them.
- f. The majority of the students transferred their L1 into the L2 and therefore were caught up in transliteration problems since the spoken language is believed to have a sharp influence on the written language.
- g. Obviously, students were simply lazy and are therefore not ready to read to improve their written language abilities.

The ideal point to note about the above concerns raised by the tutors was that, they were all against the students as if the students' writing plight was one sided. However after the intervention, even though the concerned tutors still believed that their earlier assertions could also be a contributing factor in the students' writing plight, all the four tutor representing one hundred percent (100%) came into terms with the fact that, the teaching approach of the teacher was one of the main factors if not the major factor in shaping the child's essay writing competences.

4.1.2. Effects of Poor Teaching Approach on the Performance of Students in Essay Writing

The outcome of observation and interview conducted for teachers who participated in the project indicated a dovetailing opinion on the teaching approach used in teaching composition writing. All the four teachers representing one hundred percent (100%) used only the traditional product approach in teaching essay writing and this was before the intervention. It was also detected that about three out of four teachers representing seventy five percent (75%) had no idea of how the process approach to teaching essay writing actually works although they had heard the phrase 'process writing' before. One of them had a fair knowledge of what the deference between the process approach and the traditional product approach was and how each of them was used but she hardly used it not only because the other colleagues did not use it but also because to her, it was too cumbersome and time-wasting. Again, she thought that spending time with the students by using the process approach to teach them just an aspect of the English language would not be helpful because of the numerous topics that ought to be covered within a semester. As a result of this, the teacher took no delight in following the process approach passionately although she blended it once a while with the traditional product approach. The other three teachers

who did not seem to know what the actual difference between process and traditional product approach was used only the latter in teaching essay writing. This fact was evident in the explanation given by the concerned teachers as to the steps they took in teaching essays and in assigning essay writing exercises. According to the four, the first step to teaching essay writing was teaching them the procedure for writing which in most cases was topic specific. In other words, every procedure went with a particular type of essay. The second step after exposing students to the procedure was to put a question on the chalkboard, give time and words limit and then instruct them to write. After some period, the books were taken from the students and the exercises marked. One of the teachers who claimed to use the process approach sparingly gave a fairly different view of what the situation was. According to her, a whole essay could not be taught and assessed within a lesson for a reliable result so what she did was discuss the features, and taught the procedure to use in writing the essay in one lesson, and the actual writing task followed later in the next lesson. When asked whether the students were pre-informed in the previous lesson about the actual topic on which to write, the response was in the negative. In an attempt to find out whether she conducted anything like drafting and peer-editing, the response was still negative. It clearly showed that all the teachers used the traditional product approach to teach essay writing in disguise.

The pre-intervention test conducted using the traditional product approach presented a lot of errors and mistakes in students' essays. Among the very basic errors detected in students essays were;

- a. Writing shorthand such as (b4) before, (btwn) for between, (u) for you etc
- b. Wrong separation of words as in; (cannot,) (in to) (black board) etc
- c. Faulty amalgamation as in; (alot) (infront of) (ofcourse) etc

- d. Wrongful use of some punctuation marks
- e. Lack of knowledge of capitalization as in starting a new sentence with the lower case letters
- f. Transliteration problems such as; (we are going to write exam) instead of (we are going to take exam or sit for exam)
- g. Writing too lengthy sentences that make their essays rather chaotic
- h. Misuse of conjunctions that results in dangling and misrelated constructions
- i. Inappropriate use of connectives and meaning markers in their essays
- j. Wrong spellings and concord
- k. Inability to write good introductions that contain clear thesis statements
- l. Inability to make the topic sentences in the various paragraph stand out.
- m. Poor presentation of ideas in a paragraph
- n. Poor use of expressions or appropriate register
- o. Lack of coherence or logical linkage of ideas
- p. Lack of substantial content

(Refer to appendix E for evidence of the problems in copies of the pre-intervention test conducted for the participants in the study)

It is clear that the product approach to the teaching of essay writing makes the students vulnerable for committing avoidable errors. As a result of the use of the product approach, out of a total of forty (40) students who were used for the project only 8 students, representing twenty (20%) had marks that ranged between fifty to sixty,(50-60). The rest thirty two students representing eighty percent (80%) had below the fifty (50) marks grade point. In the final examination, students were graded according to their performance as usual and all those who could not hit fifty marks or above were given grade 'D' and below.

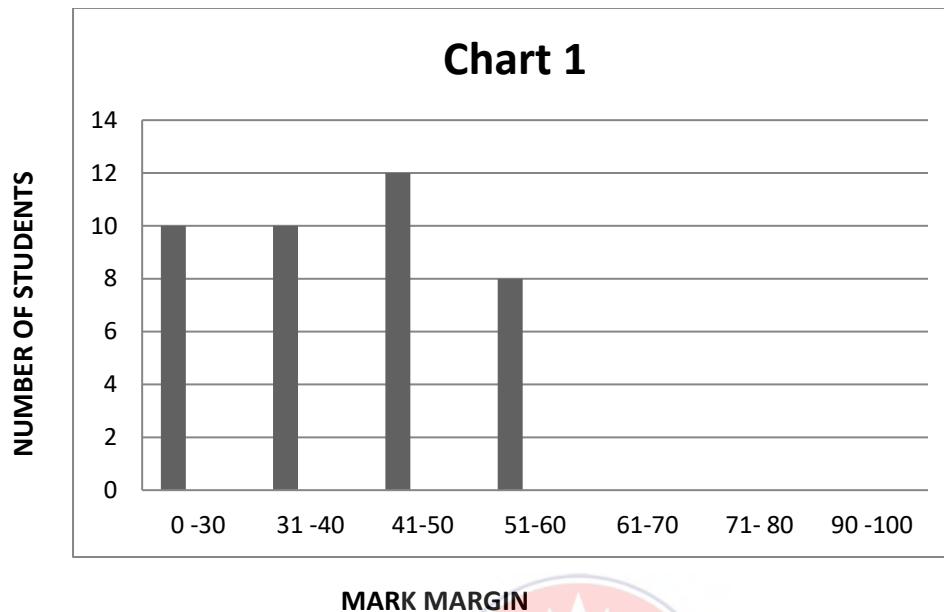
The results of the pre-intervention test that follow show clearly the above information in table one (1)

Table 1. PRE-INTERVENTION TEST SCORES

Mark margin	Number of students	Grade
91-100	0	A
81-90	0	B+
71-80	0	B
61-70	0	C+
51-60	8	C
41-50	12	D+
31-40	10	D
0-30	10	E

The chart that follows gives a further explanation of the data given in table (1) above

Chart 1.

PRE-INTERVENTION TEST RESULTS

4.1.3 Evidence of significant improvement in students' performance in essay writing as a result of the process approach.

When those essay writing faults were detected in students' essays, the researcher together with the other participating tutors of English in the school made frantic efforts by engaging in a number of activities such as encouraging them to read extensively and watch the news daily as well as guiding them to write introductions to a number of essay topics which were vetted before and during the post test in order to address the challenges regarding students' essay writing difficulties. Incidentally, their performance in the post test saw a significant improvement as compared with the performance in the pre-test. Teachers at this point went back to their various classrooms to discuss with students some shortfalls in the essays they wrote pointing out to them the effect such as poor performance in the composition component which is considered one sensitive area of the English language paper. After discussing their

problems with them, the participants were taken through exercises which were meant to re-orient them on the ideals of composition writing and the need to sit up and make meaning of their writing lives.

As a first step to solving this problem, all the participating tutors met and discussed the process approach to teaching composition writing and thereafter briefed students on the process writing approach and all the stages that the approach has to go through. Having done this, they selected a topic of interest which would be discussed in their next and detailed students to work at it by going to seek relevant information on the topic. The next meeting session saw a detailed discussion on the topic by brainstorming and assembling juicy ideas and points on the topic under discussion.

All the students were encouraged to air their views on what they felt about the topic in question. On getting convinced that the students had said enough and had assembled enough points, he went ahead to explain the process writing concept to them. The researcher explained that, every form of writing needs a systematic planning and that, writing does not just happen in a vacuum. The writer needs to think about the topic, assemble facts, break the points into segments, arrange the points in an orderly manner, link the ideas up with appropriate linking phrases and meaning markers, ensure that all the ideas point at a central them and finally prove to the reader that he has come to the end of the write-up by giving a brief summary of all the points discussed. The researcher made it clear to the students that, the brainstorming activities through which they went were done at the pre-writing stage of the process writing approach.

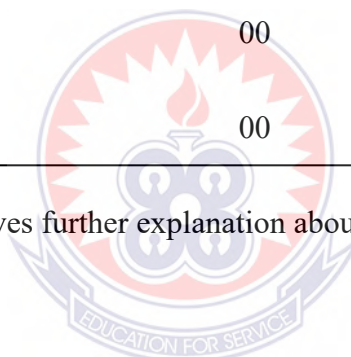
At the next stage which was the writing stage, the students were guided to write the first draft of the composition and read them aloud in class. After this

exercise, they were made to do peer editing by way of critiquing their colleagues' work. They were however advised to be fair but firm in their critique. They were also provided with plan sheets on which to comment. The researcher encourage the students not to be one sided in their analysis. He told them to balance their comments in terms of positive and negative so as not to demoralise their colleagues. After a critical analysis of the exercises, the books were given back to their respective owners to examine and react to the comments in their books. Based on the comments and corrections effected in their essays, the students were allowed to send their essays home in order to do a final re-writing. In doing the re-writing, students were advised to take into consideration, the mistakes effected in their work and the comments written in their books. However, students who were got bogged down by comments they regarded as wrong unfair from their colleagues were advised to write their own comments against the original comments research to find out the correct version or confirm it. At the end of it all, students' essays were to be seen as a true reflection of what the author considers to be right. The final work was taken for final assessment and marking in the next meeting. Below is the data showing the result of the post intervention test

Table 2: POST-INTERVENTION TEST RESULTS

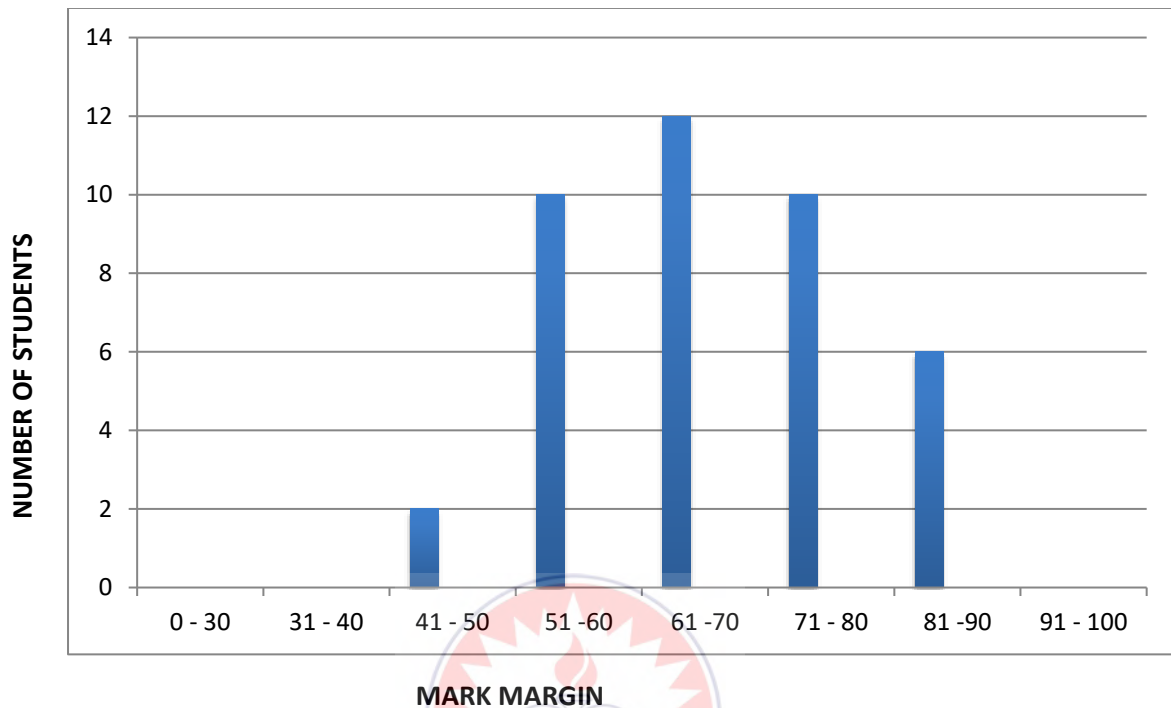
Mark Margin	Number of Students	Grade
91-100	0	A
81-90	6	A
71-80	10	B+
61-70	12	C+
51-60	10	C
41-50	02	D+
31-40	00	D
0-30	00	

The chart that follows gives further explanation about the data in table 2.



POST INTERVENTION TEST RESULTS

Chart 2

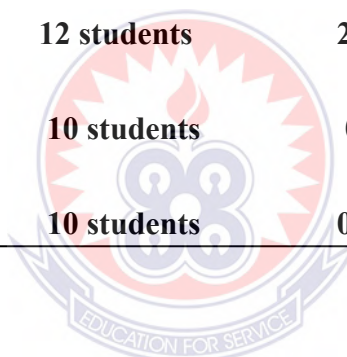


Looking at the figure two (2) it could be seen that thirty eight (38) students representing ninety five (95%) of the total number of students had above (50marks) out of the required (100marks). Only two students representing five percent of the total number of students which stood at forty (40) had between forty-one and fifty marks, a clear indication of a whopping improvement over the pre-test. A comparison between the pre-intervention and post-intervention tests will give a clearer picture.

Below

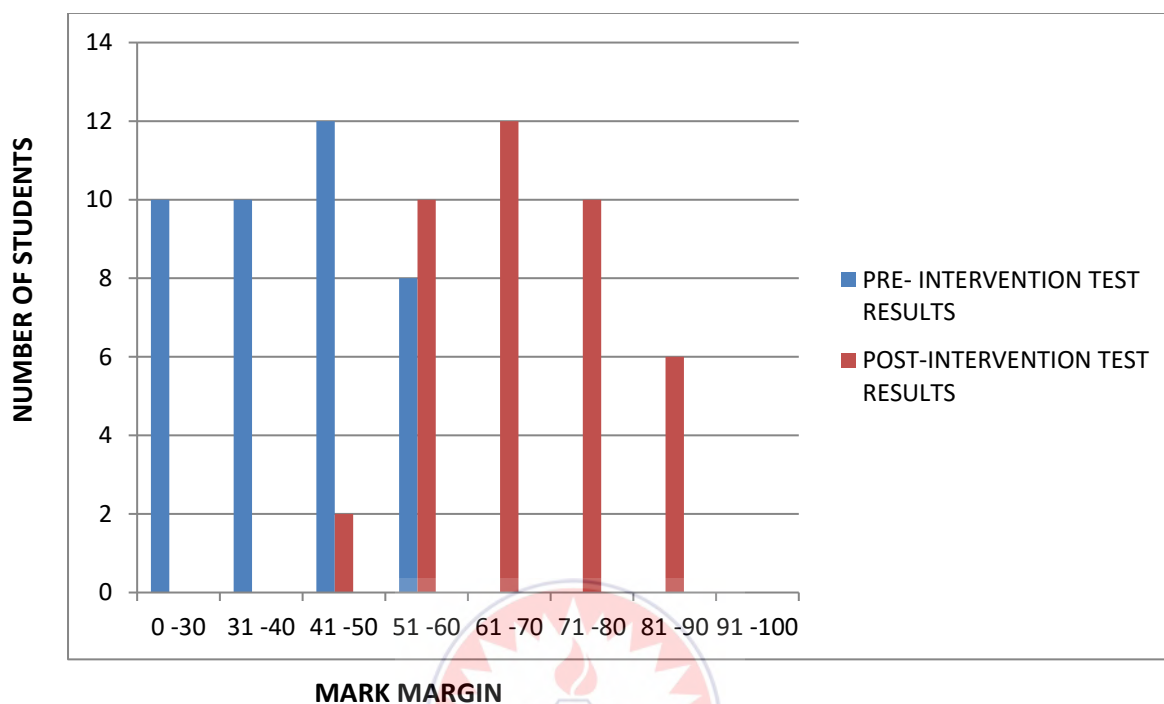
Table 3**Comparison of Pre-intervention and Post-intervention Test**

Mark Margin	no, of students for pre-test	no of students for post test
91-100	0 student	0 students
81-90	0 student	6 students
71-80	0 student	10 students
61-70	0 student	12 students
51-60	8 students	10 students
41-50	12 students	2 students
31-40	10 students	0 student
0-30	10 students	0 student



COMPARISON OF PRE AND POST-INTERVENTION TEST

Figure 3



It is clear from the above illustration that the pre-intervention test results fall between zero (0) to sixty (60) marks while those of the post intervention test fall between forty one (41) and ninety (90). One could conclude conveniently that the process approach to teaching essay writing enhances good performance than the product approach and therefore should be adopted by teachers of the English language.

Again, by juxtaposing the pre-intervention and the post-intervention test results, other details were found. The details are illustrated in table four (4) below.

Table 4: DETAILED COMPARISON OF THE TWO APPROACHES

<u>PRE-TEST/PRODUCT APPROACH</u>	<u>POST-TEST/PROCESS APPROACH</u>
a. Lots of easily identifiable spelling mistakes	a. Few genuine spelling mistakes
b. Lots of omissions and wrong usage of punctuations	b. Fewer omissions
c. Lots of concord errors	c. Fewer concord problems
d. Mistakes regarding the use of tenses	d. Fewer errors in tenses
e. Capitalisation problems	e. Good introduction
f. The use of short hands	f. Evidence of topic sentence
g. Construction errors	g. Fewer sentence construction errors
h. Lack of cohesion and unity	h. Fairly good expression
i. Poor arrangement of points	
j. Insufficient content	i. Substantial contents

As mentioned in the earlier pages, test was not the only instrument. The others were questionnaires, interviews and observations. Below is the analysis of the responses provided by the students in the questionnaires given them.

4.3 Interview

Analysis from the data shows a gross composition deficiency among most of the students. All the four teachers the researcher interviewed mentioned essay writing as the major problem with the students in connection with the teaching and learning of the English language. In the course of the interview, the teachers said the problem of writing an essay was the most pronounced among the students of St. Francis College of Education. I also decided on interviewing some of the students to find out their perception on composition writing and some of the problems they face in their pursuit to put together meaningful essays. The interview was used as a guide for students to provide short responses on issues that were related to essay writing. The interview was conducted to cover areas such as mistakes students make in terms of content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy and their interest in reading and writing essays. Besides, the teachers of English in the college were also interviewed in an attempt to investigate the methods that they employ to teach the descriptive composition.

In short, the researcher's short interaction with some of the English language teachers and students had revealed some interesting facts that suggested that more work needed to be done by government and the other stake holders as well as the teachers themselves and students alike if the dream of curbing falling standards is to be realised.

4.4 Observation

In an attempt to see to it that the findings were authentic, I sought the indulgence of three teachers of English who allowed me to observe an essay lesson each in their classes.

The strategy was very effective because the researcher had firsthand information on the approaches adopted by some of the teachers in teaching essay writing. Again, the researcher had the opportunity to observe the students in the classroom when they were engaged in a variety of activities. At a point, the researcher was intrigued by a student who wanted to know from the tutor whether every essay takes address, date and salutation. The observation gave me the impression that about 90% of the students were completely green and naïve about the features of essays because of their reactions to some of the questions posed by the tutors.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The responses of the questionnaires, interviews, tests and the observations have been critically analysed, scrutinised and interpreted as follows;

- i. The background of some of the students and the culture of introducing pupils to writing only at the latter stages of the basic academic lives is detrimental to the academic fortunes of the learners.
- ii. Most students' mother tongue interferes with the second language acquisition. Typical example is the expression 'write examination' which is typical with the non native speakers of the English language instead of saying 'take examination or sit for examination'. Here, students usually make transliteration errors due to the influence of the L1 on the L2. It is necessary for language teachers to teach the differences of the students' L1 and the L2 sounds and grammatical structure in order to reduce such problem since it mostly reflects in their essays. This is supported by Yankson (1989), who asserts that there is no way the language teacher can

adopt effective teaching strategies if he does not know exactly what errors his or her students make and why they make them.

- iii. There is the lack of teaching materials such as books, handouts and even language library, hence the teachers' inability to do explicit teaching of the composition lessons.
- iv. The majority of the teachers adopt poor or traditional approaches to teaching essay writing which in effect hampers the love for the subject and for that matter the aspect.
- v. Teachers refusal to assign students essay type questions to enable them marks the exercises and correct mistakes that are detected.
- vi. Lack of self-motivation is another factor. A tutor of English needs to be self-motivated. He / she must see the profession as a chosen one by hunting for what he really needs to do the work rather than wasting space with what he does not need.
- vii. Lack of regular workshops and in-service training to update the knowledge of teachers on the current trends is a major headache.
- viii. Incompetence on the side of some teachers of English language.

In conclusion, although problems concerning the teaching and learning of composition are numerous, it should not deter us from our genuine effort to produce students who are competent in writing the English language. We could succeed in our attempt to bring greater self development to our students by adopting effective methods and techniques that rhyme with the student's writing abilities. Besides, we need to get motivated by ensuring selflessness and dedication in our quest to contribute our quota towards nation building.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter marks the end of the study. It summarizes the study, recommends strategies for improving the situation, suggests further studies relating to the topic and finally concludes the study.

5.1 Discussion of the Research Findings

The study to identify the actual problems associated with student's ability inability to write good essays. It also intends to use the process approach to essay writing to help student good essays.

To achieve the aim, action research design was adopted. The findings are discussed below using the research questions.

1. Why are student of St. Francis College of Education unable to write good essays.

Analysis from the data shows a gross composition deficiency among most of the students. All the four teachers the researcher interviewed mentioned essay writing as the major problem with the student in connection with the teaching and learning of the English language. In the course of the interview, the teachers said the problem of writing an essay was the most pronounced among the students of St. Francis College of Education. I also decided on interviewing some of the students to find out their pursuit to put together meaningful essays. The interview was used as a guide for student to provide short responses on issues that were related to essay writing. The interview was conducted to cover areas such as mistakes students make in terms of content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy and their interest in reading and writing essays. Besides, the teachers of English in the college were also interviewed in an attempt to investigate the methods that they employ to teach descriptive composition.

In short, the researcher's short interaction with some of the English language teachers and students had revealed some interesting facts that suggested that more work needed to be done by government and the other stake holders as well as the teachers themselves and students alike if the dream of curbing falling standard is to be realised.

2. How can the student of St. Francis College of Education be assisted to overcome their challenges?

In relation to this question, the researcher provided a number of intervention treatment. Students were taken through several activities which finally improve their essay writing skills.

The strategy was very effective because the researcher had firsthand information on the approaches adopted by some of the teachers in teaching essay writing. Again, the researcher had the opportunity to observe the students in the classroom when they were engaged in a variety of activities. At a point, the researcher was intrigued by a student who wanted to know from the tutor whether every essay takes address, date and situation. The observation gave me the impression that 90% of the students were completely green and naïve about the features of essays because of their reactions to some of the questions posed by the tutors.

5.2 Recommendations

The researcher hereby believes without any reservation that if the following recommendations are well taken by all and sundry, especially the teachers of the English language and students alike, the essay writing skills will see a massive improvement.

First and foremost, the researcher recommends that teachers of the English language should eschew laziness and give equal attention to essay writing just like the other aspects. This will encourage the students to study and practice the descriptive essay writing.

Again, the researcher recommends explicit teaching of descriptive essay writing by the teachers of the English language. This will help ignite the creative writing skills of the students at their tender age.

Also, it is recommended that government supplies the schools with adequate essay writing materials and also establish language library in each college of Education in the country. The researcher further recommended the use of effective approaches such as the process approach to teach essay writing and descriptive essay writing.

It is also recommend that teachers of other subjects should try to speak or use the Standard English in the classroom and outside the classroom since their linguistic competence is seen as the trump card for proficiency in the use of the language. They should also be aware that they are using English language as a medium of instructions to communicate the lessons in their subject areas therefore; it is their potent duty to use the Standard English within and outside the classroom. This is because they are also the role models so far as English as a tool in communication is concerned.

Moreover, the researcher recommends that students should be introduced to the language learning culture by encouraging them to listen and watch the news,

follow all radio and television programs, read intensively and extensively, and eschews the use of the substandard English such as the pidgin English and Creole. It is recommended that teachers encourage students to speak good English in and outside the classroom as this gives them the opportunity to transfer the oral language into writing. Students would feel encouraged when they hear their teachers speak English among themselves and to the students.

It is recommended that the government organizes periodic refresher courses for teachers of the English language to keep them updated so that they can stay abreast of the dynamism of the English language as a discipline.

It is the researcher's fervent hope that if these recommendations are considered for implementation at the various levels of education in timely fashion, descriptive essay writing lessons will be a total undiluted fun like any other aspects of the English language course thereby improving students' essay writing skills.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

We have a potent duty to promote a research of this type since it exposes the causes of most of the problems affecting the teaching and learning of the English language as far as composition is concerned. The researcher therefore suggests that further studies need to be conducted into the language policy in Ghana in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the present language policy, where Ghanaian language is the medium of instruction in the lower primary level which is the formative stage of the child's development. The use of spoken English should be properly catered for especially at that particular level since what one speaks has a great likelihood to be transformed into writing. It is also recommended that regular workshops and in-

service training sessions be organized for teachers of English in the various Colleges of Education in the country to update their skills and competence

I also recommend that teachers should be given book and research allowance so as to make them innovative and resourceful to help make teaching and learning more interesting through the suggested new strategies for writing essays. For example, they should use the process approach and appropriate teaching learning aids to arouse and sustain the interest of students in essay writing to help them get better results.

Secondly, the authorities should ensure that only tutors who have acquired training in English language should be allowed to teach English language.

Furthermore, tutors of English should motivate students to make writing a pastime by holding annual essay writing competitions and awarding prizes to best or deserving students. When this is done, a competitive spirit would be aroused in the students and it would have a positive influence on their skill of writing.

In addition, teachers should be very mindful of how they use the red pen in marking as that can even disturb or scare learners. They must also remember to mark students' work and give scores as that mostly serves as a motivation to them.

To add to that, stakeholders in education and the Ministry of Education should ensure that supplementary readers and textbooks are adequately available in all schools. This, in effect, would influence their writing potentials. The government, and all those who matter should take the bull by the horn to ensure that adequate proactive measures are put in place to help redeem the image of academia in Ghana.

Also, this research has been able to cover the use of the process approach to address students' essay writing problem to some extent, however there is still much to

be done. This means that the problems faced by students in their journey to competence in essay writing have not been completely solved. The researcher again suggests that, the next step of the research could perhaps look at how accurately and fluently students could read. He therefore dares anyone who is interested to study the reading habits of students and work on it since it is believed that writing and reading go hand in hand.



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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Students

This questionnaire is an academic exercise meant to collect information on improving the performance of the students' skills in writing good descriptive essays. It would be appreciated if you would answer the following questions. All answers will be treated confidentially.

1. What is your age range? 17-20 years (), 21 – 24 years (), 21 – 24 years (), 24 years above()
2. How frequently do you have essay writing lessons? Not at all ()
Sparingly (), Once a week (), Twice a week ()
3. What are the features of a descriptive essay? Cite any two examples.
4. How often are you given take home assignments on descriptive essay writing exercise?
5. Do you enjoy descriptive essay writing lessons? 'Yes' (), 'No' ()
6. Would you say that descriptive essay is difficult to write?
Yes () No ()
7. Do you have any standard writing material on descriptive essay writing?
'Yes' (), 'No' ()
8. Do you have any reading materials on English pronunciation?
'Yes' (), 'No' ()
9. How often do your tutors teach teaching essay writing ?
hardly ever () once a while () regularly ()
10. Do tutors involve all the students in descriptive essay writing lesson?
'Yes' (), No' ()

11. Has the class size affected the effective teaching and learning of essay writing? ‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
12. Do you think more students’ involvement in descriptive essay will make you like the lesson?
‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
13. If descriptive essay writing were made optional would you study it?
‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
14. Do you read listen to or watch the news and read story books?
‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
15. Do you speak English at your leisure times? ‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
16. Do you speak English language when you chat with your friends?
‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
17. Do you descriptive essay writing lesson? A little (), Not much (),
Not at all ()
18. Do you like the way descriptive lessons are taught? ‘Yes’ (),
‘No’ ()
19. Do your tutors blend a number of approaches to teach descriptive essay writing? ‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
20. Which of the following teaching and learning strategies would you recommend for Students? Process writing approach (),
Product writing approach ()
21. Does your previous experience in essay writing affect your study of composition writing at this level? No (), Yes (),
22. What do you like about composition writing as a whole?
23. Would you like to improve upon your essay writing skills? Yes () No ()

24. If yes, how would you do that?

25. What would you say is the major cause of students' difficulty in composition writing?



APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for Teachers

The questionnaire for the teachers is an academic exercise meant to collect information on improving the performance of the students' descriptive essay writing skills through the process approach medium. I would be extremely grateful if you would answer the following questions. All answers would be treated with a sense of confidentiality.

1. Sex: Male (), Female ()
2. What is your age range? 26-30 yrs (), 31-35 yrs (), 36-40 yrs (), Above 40 yrs ()
3. How long have you been teaching English language? below 3 yrs (), 4 yrs- 6yrs (), 7 yrs-10yrs (), 10 yrs above ()
4. How often do you teach descriptive essay writing? Daily (), Once a week (), Twice a week (), Once a month (),
5. What is your highest academic qualification? 1st degree (), 2nd degree (), above 2nd degree ()
6. Did you specialize in any of the English aspects? 'Yes' (), 'No' ()
If yes, which aspect?
7. Do you do aspect teaching? 'Yes' (), 'No' () If yes, do you consider it a healthy method?
8. Does the school have language library? 'Yes' (), 'No' ()
9. Do you use teaching and learning support materials in the teaching of descriptive essay writing? 'Yes' (), 'No' () If no, why?
10. Do you use the process approach in teaching composition lessons?
Yes(), 'No()

- 11 Do students do well in descriptive essay lessons? ‘Yes’ (), ‘No’ ()
- 12 Do you use explicit demonstration technique to teach descriptive composition?
- 13 Identify any three main causes of students inability to write good essays
- 14 What, in your opinion must be done to improve standards in descriptive composition writing?



APPENDIX C

SAMPLE OF A STUDENT'S ESSAY IN THE PRE-INTERVENTION STAGE

Name : Adorkortse Daniel
 Index Number : SFCE-094-2015
 Course Code : FDC III
 Course Title : English Language
 Lecturer : Mr. Afeku Benjamin
 Assignment No. : Two (2)
 Date : 07/03/2014

Question: Parents

Teachers are the cause of poor performance in Basic Schools. Write a rejoinder to this.

TEACHERS ARE THE CAUSE OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL - REJOINDER.

I ^{read} saw an article which appears in Dailyguide news paper and it is to say that teachers are the causes of the poor performance in schools. It may be true but I think Mr. Kumah failed to talk about all the facts.

In the first instance, the students themselves are not serious at work place at all. The teacher do ^{not} his work well. He comes to class early and make sure he does the teaching. Can he force the child to learn.

In the second place some parents also do not help the students at all. They think that it is only teachers that must teach so they leave their wards alone to learn.

Also, to add to that one, we can also say that peer pressure group and forcing culture is killing our students.

P.T-O go.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE OF A STUDENT'S ESSAY IN THE PRE-INTERVENTION STAGE

Name of School: St. Francis College of E
 Index Number: SFCE/0094/15
 Course Code: FDC-111
 Course title: English Language
 Tutor: Mr. Benjamin Afelcu
 Class: DBE 1/2
 Date: ...
 Name of Student: Akertse Daniel
 Assignment No: One &

Q. Write a rejoinder to the topic 'Teachers are the cause of Poor Performance in Basic Schools'

TEACHERS ARE TO ^{BE} BLAMED FOR POOR PERFORMANCE IN BASIC SCHOOLS — REJOINDER

It is not true that teachers are to be blamed for poor academic performance. In basic schools because so other people also play a role in the poor performance in the basic schools level of academics work.

First, parents. Parents also play roles in poor academic work of students. Because the parents does not teach their words at the house. And also they gives them more work to do so they can not study in the home.

Again, indiscipline among the children also make them to perform poor in exam hall. Childrens don't respect so they do what ever that they like to do and they fail in their exams because they are always refuse to learn hard.

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF A STUDENT'S ESSAY IN THE POST-INTERVENTION STAGE

Name: Adorkortse Daniel
 Issues: Write a rejoinder to an article with the title: Teachers are the cause of poor academic performance in Basic Schools.

TEACHERS ARE THE CAUSE OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN BASIC SCHOOLS - REJOINER.

I read with keen interest an article written by one Mr. Afeku Benjamin Brase which appeared in the Daily Graphic of 14th January 2015 with the above caption. In the article, Mr. Afeku seemed to push the blame of poor performance to teachers at the basic schools, a notion I consider most unfortunate for a number of reasons.

C-7

E-3

EX-7

MA-2

First and foremost, Mr. Afeku has failed to understand that charity begins at home. Learning as we all know starts from the house. Before any child will do well in school, parents have a role to play. They need to serve as a guide on the child ensuring that he or she studies at home.

To add to that we all know that technology has two sides. Both the negative and the positive. Because of mobile phones, children of today do not study. All their time is given out to the mobile phone. They do a lot of things on the phone and at the expense of their time.

Finally, the cause of poor performance could also be attributed to the educational system in Ghana. Most schools in Africa do not have the needed facilities to support learning. Students are left to ~~pay~~ their fate.

- A. B.
 Frenkel