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**AN INVESTIGATION TO STUDENTS DIFFICULTY IN COMPOSITION**  
**WRITING A CASE STUDY OF BAWKU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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EDUCATION



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**DECLARATION**

**STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

I Evelyn Miilu, declare that this thesis, except for the quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE.....

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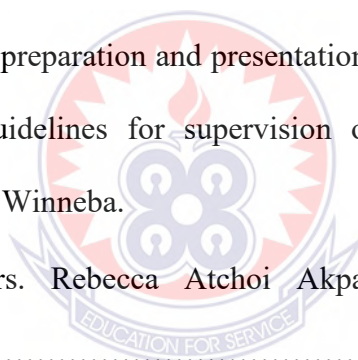
**SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

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

SUPERVISOR Dr. Mrs. Rebecca Atchoi Akpanglo-Nartey

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## DEDICATION

To God be the glory. This project is dedicated to my husband and children. Basintale Abel Edmond, Basintale Myra Taleh and Basintale Miracle Nyintasi.



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Thank you the spirit of God for the inspiration, idea, articulation, writing and composition of this project. Your love, waiting and guidance has enabled me to believe and trust in the talent my father in heaven has deposited within me for his wonderful glory.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**EFL** - English as a Foreign Language

**GES** – Ghana Education Service

**MOE** – Ministry of Education

**SHS** – Senior High School

**SRSD** - Self-Regulated Strategy Development

**SPSS** - Statistical Packages for Social Scientists

**WAEC** – West African Examinations Council

**TOESL** – Test on English as Second Language

**TOEFL** - Test on English as Foreign Language



## ABSTRACT

A case study was conducted using a mixed-method approach to investigate students' difficulty in the composition writing at the Bawku Senior High School. Purposive and simple random sampling was used to select 200 students and 10 English Language teachers for the study. Due to the approach adopted, quantitative data was analyzed and presented in the table and content analysis was done on the qualitative data. Based on the analysis performed, the study found challenges of poor handwriting/ spelling skills/writing illegibly and difficulty in copying work or completing work on printed or written pages. It also found that students have difficulty taking notes from oral presentations and demonstrate writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities. The study also found based on objective two that students have been negatively affected by the challenges of poor writing skills leading to the development of low Self-Confidence in most students. The study found that most students are unable to express themselves in writing across other subjects. Others are unable to express their ideas through communication with the overall effect being scoring poor grades in test, assignments and examinations. The study found per the West African Examinations Council Chief Examiners reports (2019) issued on the conduct of English Language examinations that four areas are considered: the content, the organization, the expression and the mechanical accuracy. Teachers spelt out strategies that are used in developing the four aspects. The study concluded that there are challenges of poor handwriting/ spelling skills/writing illegibly and difficulty in copying work or completing work on printed or written pages, students difficulty in note-taking from oral presentations and demonstrating of writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities. Students have been negatively affected by the challenges of poor writing skills and the strategies provided in this are to aid students to compose their writings in a more purposeful way in and out of school. The study recommended the organization of writing contests can be organized and best writers and instructors rewarded, encouragement of learners to write regularly, by giving them tasks that motivate them and guiding them through the topics given with resources for writing should be provided by schools and their use be monitored and GES posting more teachers to the study area since the area suffers an acute shortage of English language teachers.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a method of human communication either spoken or written consisting of the use of words in a structured and convention. Teaching Syllabus for the English language (2010) says the language is the key issue in our existence. It is the very essence of our humanity and an important as well as an effective tool for socialization. Therefore, students should make it a point to take it seriously. Africanus Owusu Ansah of “Daily Graphic” reported on Monday, July 14, 2008 edition that: Ghanaian Senior high school students’ poor performance in the English language has captured the attention of ministry of education, teachers and parents to the problem of usage as the Ghana education service at the instance of Director General will hold a forum dubbed, ‘National forum on the falling standards of English in Ghana on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008. The forum was based on the complaint that graduates of our schools and colleges are unable to speak and write English as competent as expected of their levels.

This is obvious that something must have gone wrong in their formative years. The English language is the principal medium of instruction for teaching and learning, for official work and international communication. The need to study English is therefore crucial for students as well as sectors of the population. According to the teaching syllabus for English language, senior high school 1-4 (2010) English language as a subject has four skills; these are listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are classified into receptive skills where learners receive information and productive skills where learners give off information.

Also, a critical look at the chief examiners' reports from 2016 to 2017 revealed the following are common problems: “poor construction, ungrammatical construction, poor spelling and inappropriate use of vocabulary”. Looking at the reports together with the performance of students of Bawku Senior high school, the interest of the researcher to investigate what might have accounted for the problems was raised. The curiosity of the researcher was more heightened when I was first posted to Bawku senior high in September 2014, after a bachelor of education degree. The researcher observed that students of Bawku senior high school found it difficult to identify nouns, adjectives, adverbs, phrases and others in isolation. Again, students found it very difficult to link the subjects with the verbs in spoken language and written composition. Also, they found it more difficult to identify clauses and phrases. Their knowledge of the functions of grammatical terms was detected to be abysmal. This was known when I was teaching the first and second-year students the English language. For example, students could not identify the grammatical names and functions of the underlined constructions in a passage presented to them.

Since English is the language of government and occupies quite an appreciable position in the curriculum of senior high schools in Ghana; the problems associated with it must not be taken lightly. The teaching and learning of English should be taken seriously once it is the foundation for good performance in all subjects and special emphasis should be placed on grammar. Moreover, for many years now the chief examiner’s reports on senior high school certificate examinations show that candidates have a poor command of the English language, particularly grammar. For students to construct the sentence, paragraph, or complete essay, they depend on grammar to enable them to put their ideas together to make meaning.

According to the chief examiner's report (2016 and 2017), "poor knowledge of basic rules of the English language; poor use of verbs particularly the subject/verb agreement, wrong sequence of tenses...." Thus in the suggested remedies, the chief examiner report has given teachers of English the task "to make it a point to identify student's problem areas and target them in their lessons, for example, candidates need to be taken through constant drilling in sentence patterns and construction regularly to correct such problems.

The above goes a long way to buttress the complaint by the Director-General of Education "the falling standard of education with English as a focus" as reported in the Daily Graphic 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008 edition by Africanus Owusu Ansah. This makes the research critical since there is a reason to find out the immediate causes of this poor performance and eventually suggest possible ways to rectify the issue. There is no doubt that the above-stated problems will continue to occur in our senior high schools if steps are not taken to combat the situation. This problem can be traced to the fact that teachers teaching other subjects such as social studies, economic, government to mention but a few do not check on the grammar of students when they are teaching, leaving all the duties on the English language tutors. The other tutor's reason for not correcting the grammar errors were that most of them were hard pressed with time to finish the syllabus and also to mark large scripts. With one teacher handling over 250 students correcting an enormous number of grammatical errors together with meeting the deadline for submission of students' reports, such teachers do not have time to correct student's language except things that borders on their subject area.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The writing skill difficulties are one of the most significant problems that affect not only native English speakers but also hundreds of students that are learning English as a second or language around the world. Many students have learned in high school to camouflage their lack of reading and writing skills, so it is often difficult for teachers to identify their weaknesses until student's hand in papers or take exams. Then writing deficiencies are obvious. For this reason, it is important to say that academic writing involves many requirements that students must put into practice to avoid difficulties and complications at the moment of writing essays or report papers.

Each method is useful with some students but fails with others, so writing needs to persist and teachers must take into account other strategies if they want their students to develop effective writing skills. Therefore, students and teachers must work together as a team. If students want to improve their writing skills, only in this way they will have good results and they will notice the difference in their English composition writing.

Second-year students of Bawku Senior high school are no exception to the problem of writing good essay befitting their level due to the requirements that academic writing demands of students when delivering an English essay class, it was necessary to carry out an investigation, showing whether or not students had strong difficulties for writing reports, essays and summaries, or the skills that they can apply when asked for English language essay writing, giving more indicators of students' failures and strategies and making teachers' feedback easier on essay writing.

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

With the increasing nature of problems associated with composition writing among senior high school students. The purpose of this research is to identify the fundamental mistakes committed in the use of the subject/verb agreement and tenses in student essays that have raised questions and sought the interest of the researcher to find out why students commit such mistakes as found in the chief examiner's report. Also, to account for the poor usage of subject/verb agreement and tenses as far as students' composition is concerned and to find the shortcoming, if any in the strategies teachers adopt in presenting these concepts (concord and tense) to students. Also, to provide necessary suggestions to both teachers and students in solving the problem associated with composition writing.

### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the research sought to:

1. Identify the challenges of students that leads to poor writing skills in Bawku senior high school.
2. Examine the effects of poor writing skills to students at the Bawku senior high school.
3. Indicate strategies to improve students' writing skill in Bawku senior high school.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

Based on the stated problems above, the following are the major research questions guided the conduct of the study.



1. What are the challenges that lead to poor writing skills among students in Bawku senior high school?
2. What are the effects of poor writing skills to students at Bawku senior high school?
3. What are the strategies to improve students' writing skills in Bawku senior high school?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study once completed sought to throw more light on the importance of writing good compositions. It will enlighten students in learning or the creative skills in writing and it will also aid teachers to identify some problems that restrain composition writing skills in their classroom. The study is important to the teaching of composition writing since it will show certain pedagogies and techniques of teaching the subject and suggest solutions to existing problems. This will go a long way to provide students with the chance to learn from their colleagues. Also, it will be a piece for scholars and authorities to make references to and make recommendations for future use.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

This research work was limited to only senior high school year two (SHS2) arts3, 4 and 5 students of Bawku senior high schools in the entire Bawku Township would have been appropriate looking at the topic. This would have enabled the researcher to solve if not all, some of the problems related to grammar once and for all. Instead of studying a particular year group of a school whereas the other year groups in the school and other schools around have the same problem. Nevertheless, owing to time and financial challenges, this could not be done. Students' performance in grammar could also be attributed to the 6

environment in which students come from, but the research work is solely limited to the classroom environment.

### **1.8 Organization of the study**

The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one has the introduction to the study consisting of the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study. Chapter two dealt with the literature review. It entails the theoretical and conceptual framework related to the advertisement. Chapter three includes the methodology that was employed by the researcher for the entire study. Chapter four has data analysis and presentation and discussion. Chapter five (5) brought the study to an end with a summary of the research findings, conclusions drawn and the recommendations made on the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the review of existing literature that is used to explain the theories and concept related to the difficulty of Bawku Senior High School students in composition writing. The study conducted by other researchers was also empirically reviewed to bring meaning to this current study and the relationships it sought to create with other researchers in education. The chapter ended with a summary of the literature reviewed.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

##### 2.1.1 The Composition Theory

taken as a broad concept, has two meanings: first, all of the theories of composition from the classical view to recent process-oriented views, and second, current competing methods, techniques, and notions of composition pedagogy. In its first meaning, Composition Theory refers to the classical view (Aristotelian rhetoric), the neoclassical view (current-traditional), and more recent process-oriented views (Expressive, Tagmemic, Dramatistic, Cognitive, and Social).

In its second meaning, Composition Theory, still in transition from the 1960s, refers to an expanding set of methods of composition instruction, specific functions of student writers and their teachers, classroom practices, and the supporting positions on how learning to write takes place. Both meanings of Composition Theory inform the college composition teacher. The first is durable and expandable; the second provides the forum for the exchange of information both on effective teaching techniques and on the research of philosophical, psychological, and sociological views which may support particular pedagogies. The second meaning, current notions 8

in Composition Theory, describes a confusion of partial and developing theories, suggestions for teaching, reports on student writing processes, and observations on the relationship of composition assignments to real-world writing.

Following Richards and Rodgers' (1982) division of method into approach, design and procedure, one way to order the situation is to consider today's process-oriented views of composition theory as methods of teaching and learning composition. When Richards and Rodgers' configuration is adapted to composition pedagogy, the approach entails both a theory of the nature of composition and a theory of learning to compose. Design sets forth the relationship of these theories to instruction and specifies the selection and organization of content, as well as the roles of learners, teachers, and materials. Procedure refers to the techniques and practices which result from approach and design. From this perspective, the approach of classical Composition Theory included the arts of invention, arrangement, and style, which form the basis of modern rhetoric, together with memory and delivery, which concerned speaking and were not carried forward to modern rhetoric (Young and Becker, 1981).

Part of approach in classical theory was the notion that students learned to write from the study of models of writing and descriptions of organization and structure. The design of classical composition theory was built on invention through the use of extrinsic and intrinsic arguments in developing a position. The procedure included the delivery of written text as speech. Approach, design, and procedure can be characterized similarly for neo-classical (current-traditional) theory, an outgrowth of classical theory, which emphasizes the written text as an end in itself, not as the text for oral presentation.

### **2.1.2 Process-Oriented Views in Teaching and Learning Composition**

Application of the approach-design-procedure analysis to current process-oriented views of the composition reveals methods of teaching and learning composition which are not as complete as those of classical and neoclassical theory. In these views the focus shifts from the arrangement (structure and development of discourse) to the invention (discovering the subject matter of discourse) according to Young (cited by Harrington et al., 1981). Five process-oriented views can be identified: expressive, tagmemic, dramatic, cognitive, and social. The expressive view, known also as Pre-Writing, sees invention as a process of self-actualization of the writer. Introduced by D. Gordon Rohman and Albert O. Wlecke in 1964, Pre-Writing has been developed by Coles, Elbow, Stewart, Macrorie, and others (Faigley, 1986; Harrington et al., 1981). Another view, tagmemic invention, has its origins in Kenneth Pike's work in tagmemic grammar (Harrington et al., 1981). First presented by Richard Young and Alton Becker in the 1970s, it has been further developed by Flowers, Williams, and D'Angelo. The tagmemic invention identifies four stages of inquiry and three heuristics to deal with them. A third process-oriented view, dramatic invention, devised by Kenneth Burke, uses act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose as its heuristic (Harrington et al., 1981). Bycker and Anderson, Winterowd, Berthoff, Gibson, and Coles have contributed to this view. The cognitive view, developed by Britton, Emig, Flower and Hayes, Kroll, Lunsford, and others, relates invention to cognitive processes (Faigley, 1986). Finally, the social view, which concerns itself with the social rather than individual nature of the invention, emphasizes collaborative learning and writing. Bissell, Bartholomew, Bruffee, Heath, Faigley (1986), Cooper (1986), and Reither (1985), among others, support this view. The three most visible

of these process-oriented views, expressive, cognitive, and social, warrant analysis in terms of Richards and Rodgers' three-level format. For the expressive view, characterized as the pre-writing method, approach encompasses a view of composition in which thinking differs from and precedes writing (Faigley, 1986). Concerning design, the student-writer is self-actualized through the discovery process. The teacher's role is to facilitate the student's composing process. The procedure includes numerous pre-writing techniques such as freewriting, journal writing, and brainstorming. In the cognitive view of the process, approach associates stage in learning to write with cognitive processes. Proponents maintain that an individual constructs reality through language (Faigley, 1986). Here, the design includes analysis of protocols of both student writers and experienced writers to provide explanation and example for students. The procedure for cognitive process introduces the development of heuristics by student writers. Textbooks supporting the use of this method show the stages of development of student writing from brainstorming through several drafts of an assignment, including the writer's additions and revisions, as well as the writer's comments on these changes.

### **2.1.2 Composition Theories and Student Problems**

One of the basic problems among students is the fact that many of them cannot develop their writing skills, mostly the ones who are making compositions in a foreign language. This has become very difficult not only for students but also for teachers because all of them are looking for good results in every single step of the learning process.

Through history, there have been many cases of this situation and it is important to say that this problem happens not only in our country but also in many others around the world. In the United States in 1874, 97% of the nation's high school graduates entered

college. However, although they were native speakers of English, their writing skill was poor. For example, the Harvard faculty was distressed by the low level in English on the freshmen students' part, including upper-class students. For this reason, they sought to remedy writing deficiencies by instituting freshman English (a remedial course). The original purpose given for the almost universal instituting of freshman English in college across the country, following the Harvard model was to "make up" for what students "failed to learn" in High school, in essence.

Besides, first remedial writing course at the University of California at Berkeley, subject A (a pre-freshman English course) began in 1898. At that time the University required high schools to take subject A, a non-credit composition course. There have been many disputes about the course and its effectiveness; however, the decline in essay writing scores of college students provided more objective evidence that the writing skill was getting worse. There was a significant increase in errors involving awkwardness of expression, run-on sentences and incoherent paragraphs. There were more poor writers and their scores were lower than in other years.

Moreover, the theoretician Kitzhaber, A. R. (1963) surveyed composition courses in four-year colleges and concluded that their quality and content were exceedingly diverse. He punished composition instructors and their approaches with phrases that ring true today:

"Teaching young people to write well has always proved so frustratingly difficult and the methods used so time-consuming and laborious for teachers and students alike". In other words, no one approach has solved the problems nor does it seem likely that any strategy or philosophy will provide a remedy. "Each method helps some students and fails with others. Writing needs to persist; teachers must teach composition if students want to develop effective writing skills, Kitzhaber added.

Although some of the strategies teachers use to encourage their students to be creative and organized, that is not enough. Students must take into account many aspects at the time of writing such as vocabulary, mechanics, grammar, organization and content and not only one of these items because to create adequate compositions students must take into account every single detail. The problem is that they do not care about the kind of essays they are creating and they do not follow the correct steps that will provide all the sources for their compositions. They just care about the grade they will receive at the end of a homework assignment.

Besides, remedial writing courses for students with problems regarding this skill are not accepted by some theorists. For Example, in 1974 the English composition teacher Karliner A. said that placing students in special remedial writing courses is not a solution. If teachers require little or no writing experience when they do require a paper and provide no constructive feedback, when writing is found to be inadequate, then it is foolish to expect that most undergraduates will develop their writing skills. Teachers must expect the development of the writing skills according to what they have taught to students in the writing area.

Likewise, the National Assessment of Educational Progress Report by the writer Martha (1975) stated that “poor writers seem to be getting poorer in those skills that are specific to written communication, but seldom called for in conversation: that is acquired largely through broad reading and considerable rewriting; that is most seldom taught, and when taught who have little use for written communication.”

The continuing drop in average scores on college entrance examinations provides additional evidence of the pervasiveness of the problems. The composition researcher R. Lloyd-Jones (1976) argues that the media have decided poor writing is the news and that



there is no crisis. He continues by saying, “A crisis is a good turning point; perhaps our need for good writing has increased, so our inadequacies are more poignant. Still, our disease about writing is probably chronic rather than acute.”

Jones has criticized tests and other indicators of a decline in writing skills on the ground that they emphasize grammar and mechanics, which are superficial aspects of writing, and he points out that teachers have secretaries and editors to make „silent changes“ in their works. Besides, English instructors struggling to teach open admission to students and claim that their student papers need more than editing.

In the same year, the press reported that only 34% of the entering freshmen responding to the American Council of Education questionnaire taken of an article of the magazine “Science News” thought their high schools had prepared them very well for college English courses, although only 13% had planned to ask their colleges for special assistance in writing. The main problem is that students who received high grades in high school may be unaware of their poor writing. Consequently, students entering college with good grades in English composition may have not been required to write in high school and may have minimal skills.

The problems that colleges face today in developing and maintaining effective programs for poorly prepared students must be viewed in the context of the changes that are occurring in higher education in this country, the individual institution’s standards and goals, the diverse expectations and characteristics of the students themselves, and the attitudes, teaching strategies, and expectations of the faculty. Fiscal realities and the shrinking pool of highly qualified recent high school graduates who choose to attend college are other significant influences on the kind of programs colleges offer and their effectiveness.

Although the definition of underprepared varies from one institution to another, one fact remains colleges, whatever their standards will continue to accept large numbers of poorly prepared students. Colleges today are in transition, faced with rising costs and the spectre, if not reality, of declining enrolments. As a consequence, students who have not been considered college material in the past are now being courted by colleges. Former college dropouts are also being sought to return and fill college classrooms. Increasing federal and state financial aid programs permit these new kinds of students to pay for higher education. At the same time, the number of well-prepared students (that is those in the upper quarter of their high school graduating classes) who enrol in four-year colleges continues to decline, paralleling the decline in scores on college admission tests. The high-ability student has more options if he decides to attend college. These factors combine to change the basic quality of freshman courses by removing high-ability students from those courses and increasing the number of students with lower ability and weaker skills.

While faculty members complain about the lower skills of entering students and the disintegration of academic standards (blaming the latter on the students), grade inflation continues, confusing able students and robbing lower-ability students of their incentive to learn.

Good writing requires practice and adequate feedback; which many high school teachers have de-emphasized. Students may substitute such electives as journalism, speech and drama for the traditional high school composition and literature courses. When given an option, students who must need writing practice choose subjects that do not require writing. Also, students are rarely able to assess the quality of their writing; they are usually not taught how to evaluate their work and are unaware of the criteria teachers use in grading it. Therefore, it is not possible to understand students' writing problems without

considering the expectation of college teachers. Every teacher, whether in a university or a community college, expects students to be literate because of the educational process it is supposed that every student has already followed at that level.

## **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

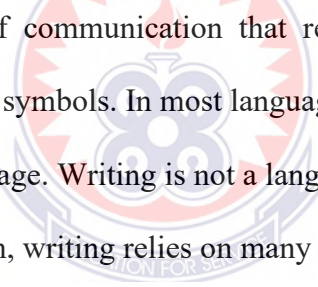
### **2.2.1 Concept of Writing**

Honby (1988, pp. 25) states “to write is to make letter or other symbols” e.g. ideograph in a surface especially with pen or pencil on paper using words etc therefore he defined writing as a literacy work. Writing is a way of presenting ideas in print, writing is an important aspect of communication. Writing it is therefore the visible aspect of communication.

David James (2002) defines writing as: writing requires learners to combine and demonstrate the skills they need for formulating and organizing their thoughts, and producing a written record of them using the rules of spelling and grammar. Nearly all aspects of life at some point require writing in one context or another. Writing is also a means of supporting and consolidating learning.

Paul (1971) said, “Among all the innovation of mankind none is more admirable, necessary, and useful than writing by which a man can express his mind, conception, without speaking and corresponding with his friends at 10,000 miles distance”. Writing is like a drug, too often employed by quacks who do not know what is true and what is false. Like a drug, writing is both a poison and medicine, but only a real doctor knows its nature and the proper disposition of its power” (Columbia University Press, 1981).

Writing is not a game played according to rules. Writing is a compulsive and delectable thing writing its reward” (Henry, 1964). Babara Switoz (1982) states that most pupils and adults people generally write to convey information, message, job application, invitation letter, job reports and memos. Writing is a way of thinking-not just feeling but thinking about things that are disparate, unresolved, mysterious, problematic or just sweet”. Toni Morrison, quoted by Sybil Steinberg in writing for your life. Puschart (1992). Writing is more than anything a compulsion, like some people, wash their hands thirty times a day for of awful consequences if they do not. It pays a whole lot better than this type of compulsion, but it is no more heroic. Julie Burchill, Sex and Sensibility, (1992).



Writing is a medium of communication that represents language through the inscription of signs and symbols. In most languages, writing is a complement to speech or spoken language. Writing is not a language but a form of technology. Within a language system, writing relies on many of the same structures as speech, such as a vocabulary, grammar and semantics with the indeed dependency of a system of signs or symbols, usually in the form of a formal alphabet. The result of writing is generally called text and the recipient of the text is called a reader. Motivations for writing include publication, storytelling, correspondence and diary. Writing has been instrumental in keeping history, dissemination knowledge through the media and the formation of legal systems. As human societies emerged, the development of writing was driven by pragmatic exigencies such as exchanging information, maintaining financial accounts, codifying laws and recording history around the 4th Millennium BC, the complexity of trade and administration in

Mesopotamia outgrew human memory and writing became a more dependable method of recording and presenting transactions in a permanent form.

The various ways of writing as mentioned above are all means to serve the purpose of communication life to solve the individual need to be able to fit perfectly in the society in which he/she find himself/herself. So the importance of writing cannot be overemphasized. Many tasks are confronting both the pupils and the teacher about writing, teachers must be alert to try new methods of teaching the child to learn to speak to communicate, read to discover and write to share ideas he/she engage in cognitive-communication. This is a new world to be opened to him/her, which enables him/her to interact freely with others.

Perhaps at the primary school level the typical Ghanaian child has not done much writing in English this is understandable because the primary school first had to teach the child necessary communicative skills, most primary schools have neither the materials resources to lay a solid foundation in the aspect of English including writing skills, also the influence of a society which does not provide adequate exposure to writing English which hampers the development of writing English in young people. This study will examine writing skills from the point of view of communication.

In the language learning field, the researchers have shown interest in the area about writing composition. Richards (1990) found that the students' interaction helps in developing the cognitive skills that involve generating ideas. Results from various language studies have shown that the teacher who emphasizes and focuses on the writing skills on the study can bring about a change. The students become efficient at generating and organizing composition ideas as a result. The most adopted teaching

model that helps in developing writing skills in the balanced literacy approach is the method of the writing process (Zampardo, 2008).

Being an ability, writing can be improved by learning through repetition. If the teachers would be aware of the writing process, this would help in teaching appropriate strategies and that would also improve the writing abilities of students in the education environment (Oberman and Kapka, 2001).

Accordingly, studies conducted in Karachi at a primary level shared the view that young students are lack writing skills and the teachers don't seem to use a proper writing process too. Therefore, this study aimed at describing the difficulties of composition writing and strategies to develop writing abilities of the students to write creatively.

### **2.2.2 Stages of Writing**

Mainly, there are five stages of the writing process, any stage can be skipped and returned to later. These are Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Editing and Publishing. Learning the writing process is important for the students as it enables students to express their thoughts, knowledge and feelings efficiently. The more the students learn the writing process, the more they will be able to express themselves efficiently (Casewell, 2008; Ozbell, 2006 & Smith, 2005).

According to Brookes and Marshall (2004), imagination and originality are valued more than the standardization of thought and truthfulness while characterizing composition writing. While assessing the student for composition writing, they are given space to fabricate the content. The main purpose is always to evaluate their composition writing and cognitive skills. For the students to write creatively, their thoughts mustn't be restricted in any way (Sharples, 1996). Planning, organization

and discovery of thought are prerequisites for composition writing. If the students are restrained they will not be able to maintain the originality of their work and the creativity might be compromised as well (Rechards, 1990)

The most appropriate variety of study is narration, speaking in terms of composition writing (Basaran, 2007). He further elaborates that this genre encompasses the factual and fictional text created by the students. To motivate the students to engage in composition writing exercises the facilitator should provide sufficient opportunities to the students to involve themselves in high order thinking and a regular habit of reading (Kucuk, 2007).

Recently, it has been observed that researchers in language learning area are intensely interested in the area of learning strategies. According to Bajarano et al (1997), a small group helps the students to device their learning strategies. Even after this point had been established, a small number of researchers looked into the effectiveness of these learning strategies- one of which was brainstorming in the field of teaching composition skills such as writing (Zagreb 1987).

### **2.2.3 The Writing Process**

Tompkins (2004) says that the writing process resembles a road map, through this the students, actions and thoughts can be monitored right from the beginning till the end. He further says that a stage from this process can be skipped and reached later on but cannot be skipped altogether. To make the students think creatively, they should be allowed to see the world through windows and observe it and they can write creatively without any fear.

All educational schools place great importance on writing. Whilst teaching, the teachers often find that some students can articulate their thoughts quite well while 20



the others are not (White and Arndt, 1991). This is mainly because writing is a skill that some students are more proficient in than others. As we all know, writing is an important skill especially in settings where English is taught as a foreign language. In classes where students are required to master certain genres of writing, the importance of writing as a skill is highlighted (Hun and O Donnell, 1970).

It becomes vital for the teachers in the educational settings to pay concentration on the growing needs of the students, their parents' expectations from their children to write in English and the requirement of the schools. Hence, this study was established to enhance the composition writing skills.

#### **2.2.4 Challenges of Students Leading Poor Writing Skills**

Good writing requires practice and adequate feedback, which many high school teachers have de-emphasized. Students may substitute such electives as journalism, speech and drama for the traditional high school composition and literature courses. When given an option, students who must need writing practice choose subjects that do not require writing. Besides, students are rarely able to assess the quality of their writing; they are usually not taught how to evaluate their work and are unaware of the criteria teachers use in grading it. Therefore, it is not possible to understand students' writing problems without considering the expectation of college teachers.

Every teacher, expects students to be literate because of the educational process it is supposed that every student has already followed some writing skills at some level. Some writer teachers take an issue with the trend away from teaching writing. The composition teacher Miles, (1975) expresses the position that teaching writing is the responsibility of each staff member. Thinking is one of the most complex abilities that often hinder students in their ability to write well. So students need help with



writing at many stages from third grade to eighth, to the tenth to high school, to college and beyond and from subject to subject. Whenever a new stage of thought and a new subject matter comes along, the accumulated abilities of the students need conscious thoroughgoing adapting to the new material and maturity.

Many challenges militate against students or are present at the moment of writing. Students are found to have writing difficulties in one or more of the following problems:

▪ **Poor handwriting/ writing illegibly**

- ✓ Does not follow lines on a paper
- ✓ Writes too small or too large
- ✓ Writes too light or too hard
- ✓ Pen grip incorrect
- ✓ Does not visually track writing
- ✓ Writes letters or numbers backwards or upside down
- ✓ Mixes capital and lower case letters inappropriately

▪ **Poor spelling skills**

- ✓ Spells phonetically and cannot remember patterns
- ✓ Spells words differently in the same document
- ✓ Reverses letters in spelling

▪ **Difficulty with copying or completing work on a printed page**

- ✓ Difficulty copying from the board
- ✓ Difficulty copying from a book or other printed material
- ✓ Difficulty filling out forms
- ✓ Difficulty completing fill-in blank worksheets

■ **Difficulty taking notes from oral presentations**

- ✓ Unable to write homework assignments correctly
- ✓ Writing is too slow to get lecture points on a paper
- ✓ Takes notes but is unable to distinguish important information from extraneous information
- ✓ Reverses or ignores numbers, parts of sentences and/or whole words taking notes

■ **May have problems with grammar, syntax and organization**

- ✓ Demonstrates inconsistent memory for sentence mechanics (e.g. lack of punctuation and capitalization)
- ✓ Persistent problems with sentence structure (sentences may be incomplete or syntax may be incorrect or disassociated)
- ✓ Does not have all parts of a well-organized paragraph (Topic sentence and supporting sentences)

■ **Demonstrates writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities**

- ✓ Writes short and/or simple essays even though he can verbalize more complex thought
- ✓ Can verbalize answers to tests but written answers are wrong, left blank or incomplete
- ✓ Oral vocabulary more complex than written vocabulary

Some psychologists have investigated about all these problems and they have identified three types of students that can suffer these difficulties among them it can be mentioned: the basic writing, the cognitive egocentrism and the focused argumentative student.



First of all, the senior high student with minimal writing skills and little previous exposure to books and readings has been called “the basic writing student”. For this kind of student academic writing is trash, not a way of saying something to someone. They have severe grammatical or other basic writing problems and have difficulty with writing academic assignments. Unfortunately, these errors tend to persist and they are seldom addressed in courses where writing is assigned. Many college students who do not have severe grammatical or other basic writing problems do have difficulty with academic writing assignments. The major problems areas in students’ attempts at academic writing are shown below, which have been identified by the psychologist Williams (1990): They lack self-management skills. Symptoms include a history of incomplete courses, turning in papers late, and not knowing specifics details of the assignments such as due date or the amount required.

They lack a strategy for composing and have no set of procedures for working through a writing assignment from beginning to end. They fail to understand and follow directions. They may write good papers but do not follow the instructor’s assignment. They write poorly organized papers and sometimes fail to select a topic. They have many errors and patterns of errors; in other words, they lack a system of proofreading. Their papers lack introductions. They have problems in understanding and accepting the teacher’s criticism. Moreover, the cognitive egocentrism is a situation that affects many students. This is when they are asked to compose paragraphs, analyze objective data and instead they write about personal opinions provided by the data. Andrea (1979) used Piaget’s concept of egocentrism to explain the reasons why these writers have problems, but she realized that apparently, they are unaware that they have veered from the assigned topic.

That means that they are not conscious of what they are doing, this just happens. Besides, the focused argumentation was studied by the professor Dean Drink, who said that many students as writers have difficulty discovering issues within topic or formulating thesis statements that take focused positions on issues. He realized that either they write a diffuse thesis statement, or they write a paper that has no thesis statement at all and also illogical papers. Therefore, it comes an inadequate thesis statement, which is the missing sense of the issue at hand.

Many of the problems that have been presented here are not only for students that are learning English as a second or foreign language. A second-language or dialectic speaker who has thoroughly mastered English grammar, spelling, and sentence structure may still have problems in organizing his ideas and writing essays. It is more difficult for a foreign or second language learner to put into practice all the strategies and techniques that have been taught to them in their composition courses since they have to think in English, not in their native language. Besides, if they have not developed this ability in their language, probably it will be impossible to become a good writer in a field that is completely strange to them.

#### **2.2.5 Effects of Poor Writing Skills to Students**

Education is expected to train the mind of its recipient for effective performance. Adequate and proper acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills in school subjects and disciplines of study are invariably functions of quality education (Okara, 2012). To be regarded as an educated person an individual needs to know how to read coherently and write legibly.

Unfortunately, most students are not doing well in school as a result of poor handwriting which has to do with the problem of expressing thought in written form.

Berninger (2008) refers to handwriting as a language by hand which is a useful reminder of its context and purpose. Oche (2014) posited that handwriting is not an isolated activity; neither can it be seen solely as a motor activity but part of language activity. Bad handwriting sometimes includes sentences that are poorly punctuated, misuse of upper and lower case letter for examples writing b in place of d, p in place of q etc., words with incorrect spacing, and sentences that do not make sense. Thus poor handwriting may make the written work of students difficult to decipher leading to distortion in the communication process. This might result in subsequent failure, underachievement and loss of motivation for academic activities. Richards (2009) opined that poor handwriting can have a negative impact on the success of the students in schools. Many students with poor handwriting are not able to write symbols well, and they cannot put their thought together coherently or write legibly in the examination and as such it affects their overall performance in the examination. A good handwriting skill is an essential part of teaching and learning, however, this has been ignored in many schools currently in Ghana. The neglect by the school authority to properly supervise children with bad handwriting is one of the contributory factors to their poor academic achievement in schools.

According to Bandura (1977), the consequences of poor writing skills are detrimental to a student's life both at school and after school. They were described to include:

### **Damages to Self-Confidence**

When a student has poor writing skills then such a factor may damage the self-confidence and morale of a student (Lynch, 1996). A student feels disrespectful in an educational institute when he experiences some deficiencies in his skills. Nowadays, lots of students are writing long essays to improve their writing skills for prospects. If

one observes that all classmates can write the essays and assignments effectively, then he may feel embarrassed due to poor writing skills. This would badly hurt the inner-self.

### **Poor Grades**

Writing skills are essential for a student. When you have good writing skills, then you can easily write the answers in exams and assignments. But, if you have poor writing skills, then you would face a lot of difficulties in academic life. Furthermore, poor writing skills may affect your grades as well. Teachers evaluate the students based on the tasks submitted. If the submitted assignments or essays that are not up to the mark then, it surely affects the overall performance of students (Harris, 1977).

### **Inability to Express Ideas**

Writing is a good way to express the thoughts. Some students are excellent at writing. While others take a bit of time to improve their writing skills. When you have good writing skills then you can easily write down the ideas in assignments and express your opinion easily (Wingate, 2006). But, if a student has poor writing skills, then he would surely face a lot of issues in expressing his thoughts during class assignments plus in the exams.

### **Difficulties in Gaining Admission**

Numerous tertiary institutions especially the colleges of education evaluate students on their writing skills. These skills are highly weighted because such students will graduate and become teachers who are required to compose essays and write legibly for their students to understand better. If such skill is not possessed by students, then they may not be considered for college admission (Hamilton & Boughey, 1997). Among the highly required skills, writing skill is the most demanded skill that is

required hence, well-reputable colleges reject students that have poor writing skills. Consequently, such students face difficulties in college admissions as well (Hamilton & Boughey, 1997). Based on this notion, improving a writing skill is a solution for students their future depends on this skill.

### **Inability to Find a Job**

In this fast-moving world, lots of organization requires valuable skills from their employees. Many corporations arrange a job fair at various educational institutes. Those companies search for skilful individuals (Ellis, Taylor, & Drury, 2005). This is the reason lots of students learn and polish relevant skills for their professional growth. Among the skills that are required by various organizations are writing skills. It is fine if a student is learning skills and acquiring relevant certificates, but, if such students do not possess writing skills then it should be thought over once more (Ellis, Taylor, & Drury, 2005). There are lots of organizations that require this skill. If a candidate is suitable for any position and he lacks writing skills. Then, there is a high chance that he may not be considered by management. Writing skill is crucial for the modern job requirements and everyone should be aware of it.

### **Problems in Communication Skills**

According to Omboto (2004), writing skills has a huge impact on communication skills. If you have good writing skill then you would be able to communicate your ideas or issue easily. Similarly, if your writing skills are not up to the mark then, you might face difficulties in communicating with others as well. Moreover, if a student wants to be perfect in speeches or debates then, he should possess excellent writing skills. Without exceptional writing skills, you cannot do speeches and public speaking (Jack & Chokwe, 2013). Once a student is good at writing, he would be able to make



a presentation and communicate his ideas with the class. Whereas, poor writing skills would never allow a student to participate in presentations and other class activities as well. Undoubtedly, words are written first, and then the ideas are shared with the audience. If a student does not have writing ability, then how would he be able to communicate with the audience?

To conclude, it is important to state that poor writing skills have lots of consequences on student's life. Therefore, good writing skill is crucial for the success of a student. High-quality writing skill does not only help students in their academic life. But, it also helps them for future professional growth.

### **2.2.6 Strategies to Improve Students' Writing Skill**

Many teachers struggle with how to effectively teach specific skills. Teachers must be equipped with specific strategies that address specific skills (Brookes & Marshall, 2004). Being fully equipped with these teaching instructions can enhance student learning and help achieve important learning goals. One common skill needed in the classroom is writing. As a student writes, they go through the process of planning, drafting and revising. Specific strategies can be taught to encourage students to improve these skills. Teaching specific writing strategies is referred to as Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD). It is a concept that allows the use of writing strategies for individual students to better their writing skills. This concept requires self-regulation by the student to take an active part in recognizing and identifying the writing skills they need to improve. The following strategies according to Brookes & Marshall (2004), are to aid students to choose the right writing skills to accomplish their writing skills.

### **Mechanical & Accuracy Skills**

David Williams (1990) mechanical skills include:

- (a) Ability to write legibly
- (b) Ability to form and combine letters
- (c) Ability to spell and punctuate correctly

### **Expression Skills:**

- (a) Ability to use structural patterns which are particularly associated with the written mode e.g. sequence of tense
- (b) Ability to choose the language suitable for a given occasion, distinguishing between formal and informal situation.

### **Organization Skills:**

- (a) Ability to divide a topic into logically arranged themes each of which should constitute a paragraph.
- (b) Ability to write an introductory paragraph, which will capture the interest of the reader.
- (c) Ability to write the concluding paragraph which summarizes the major points of composition.

### **Content Skills:**

- (a) Ability to determine points relevant to a given topic.
- (b) Ability to determine points that are of interest to a particular audience

To achieve the above, controlled or guided composition is needed especially at the initial stages of writing.

Guide composition is based on the assumption which from the foundation of such modern language that teaching aims to give the pupils the least possible opportunity of making mistakes.

At the onset controlled should be tight but gradually related to all the pupils move to into the composition creativity, thus takes over when pupils can write effectively guided composition should first be conducted gradually with full class participation that is then followed by the written aspect of the work which invariably may be completed out of class.

The first task of the teacher is to make sure he/she corrects the pupils on how to handle the writing materials he/she then moves to the recognition of capital letters and letter writing is a very useful method of training the pupils to be able to write. According to Williams & David (1990) “letter writing is not only socially desirable skills which every child should master, but it is also a use of means of developing writing skills. It is worthwhile to get children to attempt to reply letter, as this gives them guardians on the content of letters. It also involves some of the aspects of continuous writing such as punctuation and paragraphing.

In the writing process, there are methods of guided composition to enable the pupils to write effectively and these methods are:

### **Copying**

Copying here is not used to refer to mechanical writing known as hand-writing while the techniques require simple copying a text word for word (verbatim) as in handwriting, the focus of attention is no exposure to the appropriate use of words, sentences, structures, writing conventions such as capitalization, punctuation, spelling and other devices worthy of attention.

There are activities involved in copying activities and these activities include:

- a) When using copying as composing techniques choose a well-written passage within the level of the pupils you are teaching.
- b) Examination of the passage the pupils will copy for such language conventions as paragraph identification, good and suitable sentence structure, spelling punctuation, capitalization etc.
- c) Writing the passage on the chalkboard, on a portable chalkboard which could be mounted at the appropriate time, or on carbon or brown paper which could be pasted on the chalkboard.
- d) Read the passage to the pupils so that they follow the text with their eyes and get familiar with it.
- e) Discuss some aspects of the text that you want the pupils to note (this will make the pupils realize that that aspect of the text being discussed is important).
- f) After the discussion, ask the pupils to copy the text into their exercise books.
- g) When the copying has been done, ask the pupils to read through their work silently and effect necessary correction.
- h) After proof-reading papers should be exchanged or collected by the teacher for marking. Any error detected may be corrected by the marker of the paper rather the error could be underlined to draw attention to it.
- i) Pupils collect back their books and use the original text to correct their work.
- j) If all pupils have common textbooks containing suitable passage, a passage could choose from such a textbook since it is more available and easier to refer to.

## Filling Gaps

The gap-filling techniques as a state of controlled composition in different from copying because the writer is not provided everything. A text is provided just as in the case of copying but in the case of gap filling, some parts are left for the writer to fill with words. At the initial or early state, words may be suggested for filling the gaps, but later, pupils should be allowed to depend on context and their knowledge of English to fill in the gaps e.g. Habu (go/goes):

1. To school with his sister every day from Monday to (Friday/Sunday).
2. (He/they)
3. Lives home at seven o'clock. First, they walk to Gudi junction. It takes her twenty (minute/minutes).
4. To get to the junction, they take a (raincoat/tax)
5. About ten minutes. They walk again from Alushi to their (farm/school).
6. From Gudi junction to Allushi. The journey by taxi (took/take).
7. They usually (gets/get)
8. To school at about 7:40 every morning.

The example is given shows that gap-filling can be used to emphasize and text some grammatical items. Items I is a test of subject-verb concord, item 2 texts logical reasoning, item 3 tests both reasoning and subject verbs concord, item 4 tests knowledge of the plural in association with the number, item 5 tests sense about context, item 6 tests choice of words and logical reasoning, item 7 tests logical reasoning and item 8 tests subject-verb concord.

Gap filling can also be combined with the direction, in this case, a passage with gaps is given to the pupils. Each of them copies the passage into his/her paper leaving the

gaps. The teacher reads out the complete passage slowly to the pupils who then fill in the gaps as they hear the words or expression left out. The teacher could read the passage two times to enable the pupils to check for possible errors. After the dictation, the original passage should be mounted on the chalkboard for pupils to correct their work. It is also advisable to have a discussion session where the problem of pupils would be tackled.

### **Dictation**

There are numbers of different uses of dictation although it is not an exercise to be used regularly. It is primarily useful in training and testing aural reception: that is, its main use is to help pupils to hear what is being said correctly. Here are a few points to notice in giving dictation.

1. The passage should not be very long; three to ten lines is quite long enough, depending on the class. If possible, the passage should be complete a short anecdote or as complete as possible.
2. It is usually preferable to read at least once without stopping so that the pupils can grasp what it is all about. How many times the teacher reads it aloud without stopping depends on the standard of difficulty he wants to reach and also the class he is using it in. He would repeat it two or three times in class 4, for example, and once only in class 6.
3. When he dictates, the teacher should try to dictate whole sentences at a time, once only. It is better to say a short phrase once, however than a long sentence twice. The sentences should also be said in a normal conversational tone, without abnormal stresses, pauses and exaggerations.
4. After you have dictated the passage, read it over again at least once.

5. There is a strong case for getting the pupils to mark their work and to correct it immediately. This will help them to realize their own mistakes and learn from them if they have made any.

### **Dictation for Punctuation**

Normally it is helpful to dictate the punctuation but the teacher may sometimes wish to use a dictation passage to give practice in punctuation. If he does this, he needs to take note of two points.

He should make sure that the punctuation in the passage is clear and not a matter of taste. By this, I mean that a short passage of direct speech is better than a passage of similar length or ordinary prose and longer sentences. The punctuation of direct speech follows very definite rules, which are not arguable whereas the punctuation of a piece of ordinary prose can often be a matter of taste, and it is often quite difficult to decide on the punctuation.

It is even more essential to read through the passage several times so that the pupil can appreciate what it is all about.

### **Dictation for Spelling**

One way of testing spelling (a useful and necessary evil in the upper classes) is to dictate difficult words. The best way of doing this is to give a sentence in which the vital word is used so that the children can hear it in context and do not confuse it with another similar word. Thus to give the word picture, the teacher should say something like this: 'picture'. There is a picture on the wall of my room. Spell 'picture'.

You will note that this is a rather advanced stage of the guided composition techniques that have been described. The pupils have to depend on themselves for all the writing

conventions that are required in the text. What the teacher needs to observe is good reading and articulation.

According to Richards (1990), teachers are to develop assessments that can help identify what skills students can display and which skills they need to improve. Have students perform different types of writing assignments to get a better idea of the range of their skills. Students can be introduced to when, how and why to use the chosen strategy. Students may be asked to reflect on the writing process, their writing skills and the areas they think they need to improve (Richards, 1990). With this collaboration, teachers can explain how SRSD can help them develop better writing skills. Goals can be set, in this stage or the next, based on individual skills. Students can also be encouraged to engage in self-monitoring as they work toward their individual goals. Teachers should model the use of the strategy so students can understand each step (Kapka & Oberman, 2001). The teacher may use the ‘think aloud’ technique of modelling so that students are aware of how the strategy is being used during the process of writing as well as modelling self-regulation strategies (Kapka & Oberman, 2001). The teacher may model the use of mnemonics, graphic organizers and other aids that can act as supports to the students as they begin to use a strategy. Students should be able to practice strategies with their teacher’s support and guidance. Scaffolds and feedback can be provided and the students can slowly become more independent as they become more comfortable with the strategies that aid in easy writing (Walker, Shippen, Alberto, Houchins, & Cihak, 2005). The strategies provided in this discussion that follows are to aid students to compose their writings more purposefully.



## **Give Your Writing Structure**

### **1. Make sure you are clear on the concepts you are writing about.**

Since writing is to achieve a specific result, make students aware of the result they seek to achieve before diving into writing (Graham & Harris, 2005). The aim is to have a clear and concise purpose and stick to it. Albert Einstein (and) said, “If you can’t explain it to a six-year-old, you don’t understand it yourself.” Before you start writing, take a moment to mentally explain the concept to the six-year-old who lives inside your head.

### **2. If the message is complex, outline it.**

According to Smith (2000), making an outline, or even just some quick notes about the topics you want to cover, can save you time answering clarifying questions later.

### **3. Anticipate your readers’ questions.**

Improving writing involves putting yourself in your readers’ shoes. Do they have enough context to understand what you have written for them? If not, fill in the blanks. Your readers require a lot from you such that their questions are answered (Jack & Chokwe, 2013). Readers’ having their questions answered calls for them to read more.

### **4. Do not over-explain everything.**

Students should take their time to organize their thoughts in advance and keep things simple. The idea is to give readers just enough to understand what you are communicating without overwhelming them with trivial details. If you find yourself getting in the weeds with more details than you need, look at each piece of information and ask whether it’s essential to help your reader understand your message. If not, get rid of it.

## **Tighten Your Writing**

Most people sometimes write as they talk, and that can be a good thing. It keeps our writing conversational (more on that in a moment). But rambling, wordy writing makes your text hard to read, and it can make you sound as though you lack conviction (Özbek, 2006). These tips must be practised to improve your student writing skills.

### **1. Go easy on the prepositional phrases**

Prepositional phrases make your writing unnecessarily wordy and complex. Prepositions are not difficult to understand, but the concept does require some explanation (Lynn & Victoria, 2011). Get smart about prepositions here, and then try to simplify them whenever it makes sense to give your writing a much-needed clarity boost.

### **2. Eliminate the filler words and phrases**

Some words show up in our writing all the time, and yet do not contribute much of anything. Although these filler words and phrases sometimes add colour or even meaning, most of the time they contribute nothing but clutter (Rief & Linda, 2003).

### **3. Don't pad weak words with adverbs.**

Adverbs—those words that often end in -ly—modify verbs and sometimes adjectives. They're okay once in a while, but when you find yourself using them all the time, you're probably making weak word choices. Instead of “ran fast” write “sprinted.” Was something “extremely funny”? Write it was “hilarious.” The scenery may have been “very beautiful,” but your writing's going to shine if you refer to it as “gorgeous,” “lush,” “verdant,” or “bucolic.”

## **Make Your Writing More Conversational**

### **1. Stick to simple words.**

Bestselling author John Grisham said, “There are three types of words: (1) words we know; (2) words we should know; (3) words nobody knows. Forget those in the third category and use restraint with those in the second.” There’s a difference between having a rich vocabulary and dropping million-dollar words into your writing just to show off (Wilcox, Peterson, Patricia, 1991). Unless you intend to be poetic, keep your language simple and direct. I’m certainly sure you can deliver the quality of work we’re looking for. Let’s discuss talk about it in our meeting next week.

### **2. Use of contractions.**

English speakers use contractions—you’re, I’m, we’re, they’re, can’t, didn’t. Your writing will sound stiff and formal with or without them depending on the piece you are writing (Yagelski & Robert, 2005). For example:

I am sure you can deliver the quality of work we are looking for. Let us discuss it in our meeting next week.

Now, let us add some contractions. Doesn’t this sound less stuffy?

I’m sure you can deliver the quality of work we’re looking for. Let’s talk about it in our meeting next week.

### **3. Try transcribing yourself.**

You can learn a lot about conversational writing using this one trick of recording yourself. Try transcribing a conversation you have recorded (with the other person’s permission, of course). Transcribe a couple of minutes of the conversation word-for-word. Then, fix or remove any false starts and remove filler (um, uh, like, you know)—et voila!—you have got yourself some conversational writing. The process

of transcribing and editing will help you learn what to do and what not to (Zemach, & Dorothy, 2003).

#### **4. Do away with grammar rules within reason.**

According to Byrne (1988), teachers often permit students learning to write compositions to start sentences with conjunctions in all informal writing. Students are however cautioned on this grammar rule especially when writing something formal. It is preferred students end some sentences with prepositions but their writing should be natural, human (Byrne, 1988).

#### **5. Keep your sentences simple.**

Literary, experienced writers can write long, complex sentences with flair (Barasa, 2005). Why not you? Well, for starters you're probably not trying to write like a professional. Short, less complicated sentences are easier to read. Keep it simple and vary your sentence length so your writing has a nice flow.

#### **6. Read it out loud.**

Kombo and Tromp (2006) advised students to read their writing aloud to help determine whether it flows smoothly. If it sounds choppy and clipped, students are advised to add a few longer sentences to break up that steady, monotonous beat. If found to be stumbling over parts, with the overly complex sentence that needs rewriting, students are advised to do so. It is always recommended that reading over compositions or writings aloud aids writers to polish their work because it works (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

#### **7. Infusing personality into the writing**

An author's personality counts in writing hence letting your personality shine through are the best way to develop a writing style (Byrne, 1988). Use the phrases and slang

that you would normally use (within reason of formality). When it is appropriate, throw in a relevant personal anecdote. In all but the most formal or professional writing settings, be yourself when you write.

### **8. Practice, practice, practice!**

Barasa (2005) indicated that the ultimate way to improving writing is to learn what weakens it in the first place, and then set your mind to fixing (and eventually preventing) the glitches. The more you write, edit, and proofread, the better you get at it.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

According to the experiences of some foreign languages learners, most difficulties are found in the written skills, thus the main purpose of the study conducted by Lenny Johana Alvarado Rico (2014), the study focused on analyzing the factors that affected English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' performance when working on writing or speaking activities. This study conducted in hoping to help EFL teachers understands why most of their students face difficulties throughout their learning process and to identify the factors causing those problems. Furthermore, Quintero's (2008) study pointed out that problems with grammar, punctuation, lexical choice and the like have a negative impact on the content and the general understanding of a text. Besides, this study indicated that writing was a complicated skill to develop since it implied the use of mental processes rather than only using the structures of the language. For instance, the author established that those difficulties could be solved by motivating the students, by allowing them to write about the topics of their particular interest, and also by giving them the appropriate feedback of their work. In her study

that previous studies have addressed several aspects of factors affecting writing or speaking. In Jaramillo and Medina's (2011) study, the written skill is perceived as an art in which willingness and motivation are important. Furthermore, it is necessary to explain that many learners need to express their ideas in a second language but they find themselves without the linguistic resources to carry it out, (Gass and Selinker, 1994). This means that they are not acquiring knowledge correctly because they can't write well in English. With regards to writing skills, Jaramillo and Medina (2011) focused their action research on the development of writing short descriptive texts in English. The results confirmed that most of the difficulties students had were related to the construction of sentences, grammatical errors and difficulties in reading comprehension. The researchers understood that learners performed better in writing tasks when they had a clear idea about the topic they were focusing on. Besides, investigators suggested that the best way to improve writing skills was through practice. Also, Larios et al. (2008) conducted a study in which the foreign language (English) writer's strategic allocation of time to writing processes was analyzed. They found that the process of writing formulation took up the largest percentage of composition time for participants, and also that writing processes were differentially distributed depending on the writer's proficiency level.

## **2.4 Summary of Literature**

The literature reviewed indicated based on the composition theory that writing is a technical skill that cannot be acquired by chance but via instruction. The impact is that poor writers from schools and colleges often face challenges in later life when the writing problems remain unsolved. As a result, the concept of writing requires 42

instructional methods, teaching strategies and materials that only attained teacher can handle. A study by Maggot (2000) investigated the use of process approach in teaching writing skills and observed that most teachers find it difficult to teach writing. They used poor approaches and majority lectured students on how to write. Other studies pointing to lack of proficiency in English both written and spoken include Omulando (2002), Barasa (1997) and Omboto (2004). It is against this backdrop that the current study set out to identify the challenges of students that leads to poor writing skills in the Bawku senior high school to provide a way forward in improving the writing skills among learners.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

Research methodology defines the research methods and logical steps used to solve the problem identified and to achieve the proposed objectives. The study has a research design, research approach, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis and presentation, and ethical considerations.

#### 3.1 Research Design

A case study design was used to carry out the study. The design aided in the process of gathering, analyzing and tabulating data about the population (Saunders et al. 2009). According to Curtis and Curtis, (2011), the design made an adequate and accurate interpretation of the data to be gathered using simple frequency counts, percentages and other statistical methods. A case study design was adopted to investigate students' difficulty in composition writing. Gerring (2006), a case is a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some time. According to Sheldon (2006), case studies are long being used in design research investigations. Its use and acceptance have increased both by industry and academia. The design entails the collection and use of data systematically from a given population to describe certain characteristics features of the population. The design is considered appropriate for this study being that the work is intended to collect data from a small group to describe the entire population vis a vis determining the difficulty of Bawku Senior High School Students in composition writing.



### **3.2 Research Approach**

The study employed a mixed-method approach where both qualitative and quantitative data was sought from the respondents. An amalgamation of both qualitative and quantitative research methods enabled the maximization of data quality (Bryman and Bell, 2010). The researcher opted for this approach because it helped the research to become more comprehensive due to the statistical analysis involved.

### **3.3 The Study Population**

Kothari (2006) defines the population of a study as the total of individuals from which the researcher selects a sample of the study. The population of the study included members of staff and students of the Bawku Senior High School a total of 2241. This population afforded the researcher the maximum respondents such that the research questions were answered. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), a research population is the entire group of individuals about which we want information.

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique**

This study sampled 210 respondents in total made up of 200 students and 10 teachers. This sample was enough size to represent the entire population and enable the attainment of the purpose of measuring some elements of the population. Purposive sampling was used to select only English Language teachers. Random sampling was used to select the students from among the population of the study because the English Language is a compulsory subject undertaken by all students in the school.

According to Vanoorhis and Morgan (2007), a sample size of 200 is a fair representation of the population. It is further supported by Yin (2007), who suggested that a sample size five (5%) of the population is large enough for us to be reasonably confident that the stratum represents the population.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instrument**

The researcher collected primary data with questionnaires and interviews. These instruments are effective in collecting research data in a case study (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2007). The close-ended questionnaire was structured in four parts for the quantitative data. Section A had a brief biodata of students with section B-D having questions on the objectives of the study. The respondent was to strongly agree, agree, and have no opinion, disagree or strongly disagree to the items declared in the questionnaire. The interview guide had respondents state their grievances according to the study objectives three stipulating them to respond on strategies they use in teaching writing/composition in the school.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The questionnaire and the interview guide were self-developed due to the approach of the study. The researcher, with the help of research assistants, recruited, administered both instruments. The questionnaire was administered on 220 students' respondents for the quantitative data and 20 teacher respondents' for the qualitative data. Due to resource constraints, the data collection took two weeks to be completed.

### **3.7 Validity of the Instrument**

The instrument was validated through constructive suggestions by colleague teachers. The final draft was further submitted to the supervisor for corrections and final approval. These processes ensured the face and content validity.

### **3.8 Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out. The questionnaire was administered on twenty students. The responses were obtained and correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical tool for test-retest reliability. The coefficient index of 7.41 was found. This value was adjudged high and therefore, the instrument was considered reliable and appropriate for the study.

### **3.9 Data Analysis Procedure**

The researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis techniques and quantitative data analyzed and presented using frequencies and percentages using the Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

Steps were taken to protect the data gathered from the study. Protecting participants' identity is a key ethical issue that must be assured in any study (O'Leary, 2013). Being truthful is an essential aspect of the study since it made the data reliable for use at any time (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). According to Curtis & Curtis (2011), one most crucial aspect of ethical considerations is informed consent. The participants had

enough briefing before being allowed to partake in the study. The opportunity to opt-out was made for the participants. Participants had access to legal counsel when required when the need arises.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

Chapter four contains the analysis result and discussion according to the research questions of the study. The study approach was a mixed-method which required that analysis of the quantitative data was first carried out, followed by the qualitative data. The questionnaire that was fit for purpose according to the sample size for the quantitative data was 200 students and ten (10) teachers. The objectives that guided that study were to identify the challenges of students that leads to poor writing skills, examine the effects of poor writing skills and indicate strategies to improve students' writing skill in Bawku senior high school. The study presented the analysis and findings based on the answers provided by the respondents to these research questions. To identify the parameters used in this analysis, the researcher included the biodata of the respondents to give a brief perspective of the kind of respondents involved in the study. In the quantitative analysis, the researcher used a simple majority decision as the measure to determine the degree of acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis that was proposed. The qualitative section was analyzed using content analysis where the researcher focused on interpreting the respondents' views to provide understanding to the data collected. The researcher's opinion was also provided together with supporting literature to back the claims of the respondents.

#### 4.1 Analysis of students Biodata (Quantitative - Students)

In social sciences and other related fields, respondents' biodata has a crucial role in any study which enables a researcher to make informed decisions based on the type of people involved in the study (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). It equally allows the opportunity to express and give the needed responses concerning the problem stated. In this study, a set of personal characteristics, namely gender, and age of the respondents were examined and presented.

##### Gender of Respondents (Students)

As shown in Table 1, the gender of respondents gathered was part of the biodata for purposes of analysis.

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Male	86	43%
Female	114	57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data (2020)

Out of the 200 respondents, 114 (57%) forming a majority was female and 86 (43%) forming the minority were male. There was a female dominance based on the number of respondents who took part in the study. It must be noted from the outset that gender differences in this study did not show to what degree students develop their skills in writing but for descriptive purposes only. The impact gender has on respondents' have been highlighted in a range of settings over a long period. Women have constituted a large proportion of most respondents for a relatively short period.

According to Richardson and Woodley (2003), women made up 55% of the West African Sub-region. This statistic had consistently risen since (1985) when female respondents were only 30% of many studies. They overtook men in 1992/1993, and have remained the majority since then. It was therefore confirmed in this study that the long-held perception holds for female in terms of consumer behaviour. Smith and Naylor (2001) noted that the last 20 years saw a marked shift in the proportion of female respondents in most researches. Though there was more female than male in this study sample, the statistic has nothing to do with gender equality or equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities in the study.

### Age Range of Respondents

The researcher presented the age range of respondents in Table 2.

**Table 2: Age Range of Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Below 14 years	46	23%
15 - 17 years	96	48%
Above 17 years	58	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data (2020)

Out of the total sample, 46 respondents representing 23% were below 14 years. About 96 respondents representing 48%, were between the ages of 15 – 17 years. Finally, 58 respondents representing 29% were found above 17 years. The age distribution of the respondents indicates that the majority (48%) of the respondents were within the right age bracket for senior high school.

A study by Broussard and Garrison (2004), investigated the effect of age on students learning. In their findings, age had a significant effect on what is learnt at school, hence maturity counts in learning including the development of writing skills. On the contrary, a study by Rumberger (1995) found that younger students show more aggressiveness in their learning therefore, age alone does not effectively determine the development of writing skills.

## 4.2 Analysis of Main Data (Quantitative - Students)

### 4.2.1 Objective One: Identify the challenges of students that leads to poor writing skills in Bawku senior high school.

The researcher wanted to know the challenges students undergo that leads to their poor writing skills in the Bawku Senior High School as a result of which statements have been formulated for the respondents to make their decision. The data gathered from the responses are shown in tables 3 – 6 for discussion.

**Table 3: There are challenges of Poor handwriting/ spelling skills/writing illegibly**

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	Total
There are challenges of									
Poor handwriting/	100	50%	60	30%	20	10%	20	10%	200
spelling skills/writing									
illegibly.									

Source: Field Data (2020)

Data on Table 3 shows that (100), representing 50% of the respondents strongly agreed, (60) representing 30% agreed, (20) representing 10% were neutral, and (20)



representing 10% disagreed that students face challenges of poor handwriting, spelling and illegibility. The majority decision, according to the available data of the respondents validates that the challenges identified exist and require attention. Students who disapprove of these challenges might have had a prior introduction to the tenets of good composition writing either at the basic level or from private tuition and might not see that as a challenge. Due to the future consequences of poor writing skills, schools across the country are resourcing their English Language departments to ensure that pragmatic measures are taken to bring the situation under control. In the category of poor handwriting/ writing illegibly, students appear to show writing that does not follow lines on a paper, writes too small or too large, writes too light or too hard, incorrect pen grip, does not visually track writing, writes letters or numbers backwards or upside down and mixes capital and lower case letters inappropriately.

According to Miles, (1975), teaching writing is the responsibility of each staff member. Miles indicated that thinking is one of the most complex abilities that often hinder students in their ability to write well. In this light, students spell phonetically and cannot remember patterns, spells words differently in the same document and reverses letters in spelling. So students need help with writing at many stages from third grade to eighth, to the tenth to high school, to college and beyond and from subject to subject.

**Table 4: There is difficulty with copying or completing work on a printed page**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>
There is difficulty with copying or completing work on a printed page	106	53%	80	40%	14	7%	0	0%	200

Data on Table 4 shows that (106), representing 53% of respondents strongly agreed, (80) representing 40% of respondents agreed and (14) representing 7% of the respondents were neutral on the statement of students difficulty with copying or completing work on a printed page. Given the majority decision upholding the hypothesis, it is evident that the respondents have challenges with writing especially with copying or completing writing assignments. It is worth noting that in schools, core points are summarized as notes for students to copy into their notebooks. A student's inability to copy such notes leaves him/her with nothing to take home. In this regard, their academic work tends to suffer silently in gone unnoticed. The evidence shows that students have difficulty copying from the board, difficulty copying from a book or other printed material, difficulty filling out forms and difficulty completing fill-in blank worksheets.

Andrea (1979) used Piaget's concept of egocentrism to explain the reasons why these writers have problems, but she realized that apparently, they are unaware that they have veered from the assigned topic. Moreover, the cognitive egocentrism is a situation that affects many students. This is when they are asked to compose

paragraphs, analyze objective data and instead they write about personal opinions provided by the data.

**Table 5: Students have difficulty taking notes from oral presentations**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>
Students have difficulty taking notes from oral presentations	80	40%	66	33%	40	20%	14	7%	200

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 5 shows that (80) representing 40% of respondents strongly agreed, (66) representing 33% of respondents agreed to the statement that students have difficulty in taking notes from oral presentations at school. Also, (40) of the respondents (20%) remained neutral, while (14) representing 7% disagreed with the statement. There is a majority decision upholding students' difficulty in taking notes from oral presentations. At the senior high school level, the teacher often dictate notes for students to copy due to the tedious task of writing on the chalkboard. But evidence from this data shows that majority of these students have challenges in taking these notes leading to poor performance with time. In this situation, students are unable to write homework assignments correctly. Most of the time, writing is too slow to get lecture points on a paper. Some students take notes but are unable to distinguish important information from extraneous information. Others reverse or ignore numbers, parts of sentences and/or whole words taking notes. Oral presentations in themselves are supposed to increase the speed at which a teacher delivers a lesson to

matured students. Considering the age range of the students as indicated in this study, 55



most of the students are immature for the task. Secondly, most of these students in the senior high school came from very bad public junior high schools dotted across the country who have not had a prior introduction to note-taking in their schools.

Miles (1975) revealed that many challenges militate against students or are present at the moment of writing. He emphasized that whenever a new stage of thought and a new subject matter comes along, the accumulated abilities of the students need conscious thorough going adapting to the new material and maturity hence their ability to copy the new material is relevant to their knowledge acquisition.

**Table 6: Students demonstrates writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities**

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	Total
Students demonstrates writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities	74	37%	60	30%	46	23%	20	10%	200

Source: Field Data (2020)

Examining the data on Table 6, about (74) respondents representing 37% of respondents strongly agreed with the researcher, (60) representing 30% agreed, (46) representing 23% were neutral about the statement, and (20) made of 10% disagreed.

The indication is that majority decision favours the hypothesis that students demonstrate writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities. The major problems areas in students' attempts at academic writing identified by psychologist Williams (1990)

indicates that they lack self-management skills. Symptoms include severe grammatical or other basic writing problems and have difficulty with writing 56

assignments. Unfortunately, these errors tend to persist and they are seldom addressed in courses where writing is assigned. Many students who do not have severe grammatical or other basic writing problems do have difficulty with academic writing assignments. According to Young and Becker (1981), the classical composition theory included the arts of invention, arrangement, and style, which form the basis of modern rhetoric, together with memory and delivery and concerned with speaking and were not carried forward to modern rhetoric.

But the evidence as indicated in the responses is that many students have problems with grammar, syntax and organization. Others demonstrate inconsistent memory for sentence mechanics (e.g. lack of punctuation and capitalization). With the rest showing persistent problems with sentence structure (sentences may be incomplete or syntax may be incorrect or disassociated) that does not have all parts of a well-organized paragraph (Topic sentence and supporting sentences). With this condition, students write short and/or simple essays even though he can verbalize more complex thought. Some students can verbalize answers to tests but written answers are wrong, left blank or incomplete. The rest view oral vocabulary more complex than written vocabulary.

The researcher thinks that the classical composition theory has not catered enough for modern composition writing as many of the problems that have been presented here are not only for students that are learning English as a second or foreign language. A second-language or dialectic speaker who has thoroughly mastered English grammar, spelling, and sentence structure may still have problems in organizing his ideas and writing essays. It is worth noting from the researcher view that there exist difficulties for a foreign or second language learner to put into practice all the strategies and 57

techniques that have been taught to them in their composition courses since they have to think in English, not in their native language. Besides, if they have not developed this ability in their language, probably it will be impossible to become a good writer in a field that is completely strange to them.

#### **4.2.2 Objective Two: Examine the effects of poor writing skills to students at the Bawku senior high school.**

The second objective in this study sought to examine the effects poor writing skills have had or have on students' academic or life after school. It is envisaged that majority of these students while in school have secretly suffered consequences thereof leading to detrimental situations that could have been avoided with good intervention strategies. As a result, respondents' were to decide on the effects of poor writing skills in the study area. The data obtained are presented in tables 7 – 10 of this study for discussion.

**Table 7: Students have low Self-Confidence in themselves**

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%	Total
Students have low self-confidence in themselves	64	32%	62	31%	36	18%	16	8%	22	11%	200

Source: Field Data (2020)

Data available in Table 7 shows that 64 respondents representing 32% of the sample strongly agreed to the hypothesis students have low Self-Confidence in themselves and 62 respondents representing 31% agree with 36 representing 18% of the

respondents being neutral. About 8% of the respondents disagreed and 11% strongly disagreed to the hypothesis. Once there are challenges in students' ability to write good compositions and essays, they tend to lose their self-confidence both in and out of school as indicated by the evidence available in Table 7. According to Bandura (1977), the consequences of poor writing skills are detrimental to a student's life both at school and after school. A student feels disrespectful in an educational institute when he experiences some deficiencies in his or her writing skills. If one observes that all classmates can write the essays and assignments effectively, then he may feel embarrassed due to poor writing skills. When a student has poor writing skills then such a factor may damage the self-confidence and morale of a student (Lynch, 1996). Many students with poor handwriting are not able to write symbols well, and they cannot put their thought together coherently or write legibly in the examination and as such it affects their overall performance in the examination. This according to Richards (2009), can have a negative impact on the success of the students in schools making them lose self-confidence.

**Table 8: Students often score poor grades in test, assignments and examinations**

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%	Total
Scores poor grades in assignments test, and examinations	70	35%	60	30%	28	14%	22	11%	20	10%	200

Source: Field Data (2020)



The data in Table 8 shows that students often scoring poor grades in test, assignments and examinations. About 70 respondents representing 35% of the total sample strongly agreed and 60 representing 30% of the respondents agreed and 28 representing 14% of the respondents considered as neutral. Also, 22 respondents representing 11% disagreed and 20 representing 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed to the hypothesis. The indication is that majority of the respondents consented to poor performances as a result of the challenges in writing at school. Inability to write well is detrimental to every student at any level and consequently could lead to poor performances as evident in the respondents' views. As indicated by Harris (1977), writing skills are essential for every student. Good writing skills aid students to easily write answers in exams and assignments, but poor writing skills make students face a lot of difficulties in academic life and consequently affect your grades as well and life after school (Harris, 1977). Since teachers evaluate the students based on the tasks submitted, assignments or essays that are not up to the mark surely affects the overall performance of students (Harris, 1977).

**Table 9: Students are unable to express themselves in writing across other subjects**

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%	Total
Inability to express themselves in writing across other subjects	74	37%	68	34%	24	12%	24	12%	10	5%	200

Source: Field Data (2020)

The data in Table 9 shows that (74) respondents representing 37% of the sample strongly agree and (68) representing 34% of the respondents agree that students are 60

unable to express themselves in writing across other subjects. About 24 respondents forming 12% were neutral, another 12% disagreed, and only 5% strongly disagreed. On the face of the evidence, respondents consented to their inability to express themselves in other subjects aside from the English Language. It is important to stress that every subject including Mathematics requires a level of writing to substantiate the idea one is expressing. As expressed by Wingate (2006), writing is a good way to express the thoughts and some students are excellent at it. Others students as evident in the data take a bit of time to improve their writing skills. Good writing skills according to Wingate (2006) enables students to express their ideas and thoughts during class engagements and in assignments and examinations.

**Table 10: Students have problems expressing their ideas through communication Skills**

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%	Total
Students have problems expressing their ideas through communication	62	31%	64	32%	40	20%	16	8%	18	9%	200

Source: Field Data (2020)

Data in Table 10 shows that respondents who strongly agreed to the hypothesis in question were 62 representing 31% of the sample. About 64 respondents forming 32% agreed to the hypothesis and 40 making 20% remained neutral. The data also shows that 16 respondents representing 8% disagreed and 18 representing 9% of the sample strongly disagreed. The

data shows the majority upheld that students have problems expressing their ideas through communication as a result of their inability to write well. In school, students are taught to read and write as basic tenets of literacy upholding the purpose of education. It implies that the two go hand in hand, hence challenges in writing consequently impede students' abilities in other forms of communication at school or home. Therefore, if you have good writing skill then you would be able to communicate your ideas or issue easily. Similarly, if your writing skills are not up to the mark then, you might face difficulties in communicating with others as well.

According to Omboto (2004), writing skills has a huge impact on communication skills. Moreover, if a student wants to be perfect in speeches or debates then, he should possess excellent writing skills. Without exceptional writing skills, you cannot do speeches and public speaking (Jack & Chokwe, 2013). The implication is that once a student is good at writing, he would be able to make a presentation and communicate his ideas with the class. Whereas, poor writing skills would never allow a student to participate in presentations and other class activities as well. Undoubtedly, teachers are aware that words are written first, and then the ideas are shared with the audience. This lends credence to the question that if a student does not have writing ability, how would he be able to communicate with the audience? High-quality writing skill does not only help students in their academic life but also helps them for future professional growth. To conclude, it is important to state that poor writing skills have lots of consequences on student's life. Therefore, emphasis must be laid on the development of good writing skill as it is crucial for the success of a student.

### **4.3 Content Analysis of Main Data (Qualitative – Teachers)**

#### **4.2.3. Research Objective Three**

The number of teacher respondents' from the Bawku Senior High School who took part in the study were given the following codes to indicate how each staff member responded to the various questions posed based on research question three. (BSHSET= Bawku Senior High School English Teacher #1 - 10).

Indicate strategies to improve students' writing skill in Bawku senior high school.

#### **Section A - Bio-Data of Respondents (Teachers)**

In terms of gender, there were four (4) male representing 40% of the teacher respondents and six (6) female representing 60% of the respondents. There was a female dominance in the staff representation in the study. According to Oyeleyo (2002), most females than male have pursued their teaching careers teaching the English language across the country with the Bawku Senior High School not an exception.

Per the teaching qualification of the teacher respondents, four (4) teachers representing 40% had either Bachelor of Education or Bachelor of Science degrees in linguistics of which the English Language forms part. About fifty per cent of the respondents also possess a Master of Education or Master of Science in linguistics from recognized universities in Ghana. There is however one teacher representing 10% who had a Diploma in Dagaare but teaches in the English Department of the senior high school due to scarcity of Ghanaian language teachers in most communities in Ghana.

Considering the teaching experiences of the respondents, one teacher has between 0-5

years' experience in the field of teaching. About fifty per cent had  
between 6 and 63

10years of experience teaching the English Language. Teacher with 11 years and above was forty per cent of the teacher respondents in the study. The data shows that there are seasoned teachers in the school based on the number of years they have handled the subject in the school coupled with their qualifications. According to Williams (2004), experience on a job counts in ensuring effectiveness and quality at all times. It is therefore required that these teachers give in their best to ensure quality teaching and learning especially in writing and composition.

### **Section B –Methods to improve students’ writing skill**

English Language examination across the world have had four major areas that examiners look at when marking composition. It is also emphasized by the West African Examinations Council Chief Examiners reports (2019) issued on the conduct of examinations. These areas are the content, the organization, the expression and the mechanical accuracy. It is therefore important to develop strategies to teach students how to effectively deal with these aspects.

#### **(I) Strategies for reinforcing Mechanical Accuracy skills**

Several strategies could be used to effectively teach writing and other aspects of composition that is demanded from teachers (McKeachie, Wilbert and Marilla, 2006). Students at the senior high school per the age ranges are matured enough to make choices that impact positively on their school life. The researcher, therefore, sought to find out measures students also deem appropriate in aiding them to improve their writing skills in the school. In reinforcing and develop mechanical accuracy writing skills. Three respondents stated the following.


*One way that the teacher can help students overcome the mechanical barriers of writing is to have students dictate while the teacher transcribes (BSHSET#3). The student, in the author's role, generates ideas and composes sentences as the teacher, in the secretary's role, takes responsibility for the production (BSHSET#2). Dictation fulfils the first evaluative criterion by helping students focus attention on ideas during the first draft (BSHSET#1). When the teacher takes responsibility for the mechanical aspects of the process, the student is free to concentrate on topic ideas (BSHSET#2).*

MacArthur and Graham (1987) demonstrated in their research that dictation (by the student to teacher) can significantly increase the length and quality of compositions by students with learning disabilities (LD).

The second method of assistance does not have the same empirical support as dictation. According to Gottschalk, Katherine and Keith (2004), teachers can assist students by supplying them with the spellings of important words before they write. Two teachers also indicated the following.

*When the teacher chooses the topic, spellings can be pre-cued on prompt cards where students choose their topic, the teacher and students can generate a word list that will be written on a chart or chalkboard for future reference (BSHSET#5). For example, in writing about a store, the class might suggest words such as friendly, candy, and vegetables as the teacher write them on the board as pre-cueing enables students to focus attention on ideas, although somewhat inconsistently (BSHSET#4).*

Gleason, Isaacson, Good, and Yocom (1996) conducted a study that compared four types of teacher assistance on the first-draft writing of students with learning problems. According to the West African Examinations Council chief examiners report on the English Language (2019), Mechanical Accuracy is allocated ten (10) marks in writing. It further stated that under mechanical accuracy, examiners are mainly looking at the candidate's ability to use the mechanics of the English language. Here, the examiners are looking at things such as the proper use of punctuation marks, correct spellings, good tenses, etc. Emphatically, the more spelling errors, punctuation errors, etc that a student makes, the more marks you are going to lose. There are several methods of teaching students mechanical accuracy.



## **(II) Strategies for reinforcing and developing expression writing skills in students.**

Based on the assessment criteria in the West African Examinations Council used in school, expression in composition writing takes the largest marks of 20. It is against this notion that skills in the expression must be given the needed attention. What the examiners are looking for here is the candidate using the right expressions in his or her composition. If a candidate score between 16 and 19 marks here, then it means his/her expressions are very good.

Based on the interview conducted, four (4) teachers have this to say.

*Teachers allow students use a dictionary or personal word book to look up the spelling of unknown words which is an appealing approach from the standpoint of teaching students a self-regulated strategy similar to one*

*adult's use (BSHSET#8). Unfortunately, a word book does not always enable attention to focus on ideas therefore, it is important to assist with the development of a schedule allowing time to complete assignments (BSHSET#6). Allow students to work in small periods rather than spending hours at a time, begin with a brainstorming stage where ideas about the subject are written down with student having spelling or graphomotor problems, allow the use of a computer if available (BSHSET#7). They should be helped to organize their ideas from the brainstorming to an organizational model (i.e. a story map, a timeline, an outline, organizational software such as Inspiration, Spark-Space) (BSHSET#10).*

Gleason et al. taught one group of students to use a personal word book (calling it My Spelling Dictionary). They found that a few students with learning problems used it to good advantage. It is because, under expression, the examiner looks at the type of essay or composition that the student writes and judges accordingly. For example, the expressions used in an informal letter should differ from that used in a formal letter because the two letters are not the same. In an informal letter, the examiner expects the candidate to use a great deal of conversational and informal expressions. The teacher who answered on this aspect indicated that:

*Encouraging the student to elaborate on which ideas need to be included in the assignment within the organizational model, beginning writing first/rough draft from the model and edit for vocabulary usage, sentencing, grammatical constructions, mechanics of writing (spelling,*



*capitals, punctuation, paragraphing) are important in expressing their ideas better (BSHSET#9).*

According to Davis, Barbara (2009) using available resources may also include asking the teacher for spelling help. In this commonly used strategy, the student raises his or her hand when he or she cannot spell a word, and the teacher comes and spells it as the student writes it down. Asking the teacher does not always enable student attention to focus on ideas. In Gleason et al.'s study, teacher-supplied spelling had inconsistent results for high- and low-functioning students. For students who wrote fewer than 50 words at baseline, teacher assistance seemed to increase their fluency during the intervention. If the candidate goes using very formal expressions here, then he or she gets penalized. The same applies to a formal letter. In school, we are taught that formal letters require formal language and expressions. It, therefore, means there is no room for colloquialisms, slangs, contracted words etc. If your expressions become informal or colloquial here, you will be penalized. In dealing with expressing challenges, the following strategies are effective for students in senior high schools.

### **(III) Strategies for reinforcing and developing organizational writing skills in students.**

Based on the importance of organizing ideas in composition, it is prudent teachers take the necessary steps to teach their students concise skills to aid them to perform better academically despite it having the least mark (5) in compositions. Under organization, the examiners are checking whether the candidate properly organized his or her essay. The examiner wants to know whether the facts, ideas, and points arranged properly, with a suitable introduction, good paragraphing of the work, links

between the paragraphs good or there is a smooth transition from one paragraph to another, there are balance, unity and coherence in the composition. Two (2) teachers made their strategies known by indicating that:

*Promoting peer collaboration in class is the strategy for ensuring that students organize their thoughts well in the planning stage to generate ideas together before writing (BSHSET#2). The success of the process approach to writing often is attributed to the establishment of a social context in classrooms in which students share their writing to help each other with all aspects of writing (BSHSET#4).*

During the drafting stage, partners can collaborate to supply or invent spellings. In the rewriting stage, peers can assist in editing each other's stories (Stoddard & MacArthur, 1992).

Another important thing that examiners look for under the organization is whether the candidate used the appropriate format for writing the essay. There are so many types of essays and each of them has a specific format. For example, the format for a debate is not the same as that of a formal letter. So if a student is required to write a formal letter but goes ahead to write it using the wrong format, then he or she is severely penalized. Three (3) respondents indicated their strategies by stating that:

*Teaching a self-checking strategy is very important in getting students to organize their ideas well especially when a student is producing the final draft, the teacher should teach a self-checking strategy that the student can use when editing their work (BSHSET#1). Concern about correctness during the planning or drafting stages can interfere with fluency and idea generation as a self-checking strategy also improves*

*the readability of the message (BSHSET#5). However, as with the word book, a self-checking strategy does not necessarily improve spelling or punctuation if a student does not suspect a word is misspelt or a punctuation error has been made (BSHSET#3).*

Archer and Gleason (1989) suggested this strategy: The self-checking strategy is not intended for first-draft writing and therefore should not affect fluency. This strategy could enable attention to focus on ideas if the teacher remembers to use the strategy only in the production of the final draft, separating mechanical concerns from idea generation (Archer and Gleason, 1989).

#### **(IV) Strategies for reinforcing and developing content skills in students.**

According to Mak & Coniam (2008), most students made severe mistakes by writing essays that the content does not reflect and develop the real topic. Other wrote essays without an introduction and without a thesis statement to express the key idea of the essay. Other students wrote a thesis statement that they failed to develop due to the lack of ideas. Other students used ideas, which they cannot prove with examples.

Based on the marking scheme in the WAEC examinations, the student is fighting for 15 marks from the examiner under the content. A very good candidate can score between 11 and 14 marks here. When examiners are awarding marks for the content, they focus their attention on whether the candidate has written about the topic that they were asked to write about or not. A candidate who can thoroughly grasp and understand what the question is all about normally does very well here. Examiners are

quick to reward candidates who tackle the topic of the question. Many teachers have 70

perceived the use of technology to be effective in improving their students' writing. On the other hand, the empirical support of these effects has been mixed. Positive results depend on several factors, including the accompanying instruction. One teacher who is computer literate stated the following:

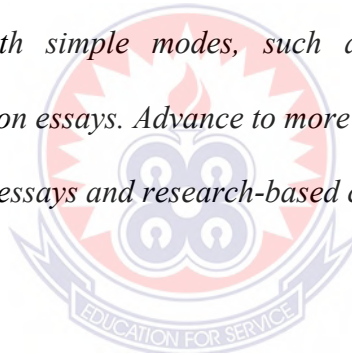
*The potential (or theoretical) benefits of computer-assisted writing include easing the physical demand of writing; making letters and sentences visible on the screen, thereby helping to focus the student's attention on the text; revising without tedious recopying; making the text more legible to the teacher, thereby facilitating assistance; facilitating collaboration between student and peers in cooperative writing; and producing a neat, attractive product that promotes the student's self-image as a writer (BSHSET#7).*

As MacArthur, Graham, and Schwartz (1993) noted, "Word processing alone does not lead to better revision unless instruction focuses on how to revise effectively". Computer-assisted writing does not necessarily alleviate the mechanical challenges of writing for students with learning problems and enable the writer to focus on ideas (Bean and John, 2011). Computer-assisted stories by students with learning problems in lower Grades 4 through 6 were not any longer or better than handwritten stories. However, the ease of revision provided by a word processor creates the potential for students to concentrate on authoring while writing a first draft and edit for mechanics at a later time (Daiute, 1986).

Also, the same examiners are very quick to penalize candidates who deviate from the topic of the question. According to many English Language marking schemes all over the world, examiners are expected not to award even a single mark for content when a

candidate deviates from the topic or writes about something irrelevant to the question. This makes the development of content skills in students for composition very important. It is also the more reason why candidates should make sure that they have fully understood the question given to them before they begin answering it. Here, for every point that you bring, there is the need for you to explain it in great detail to further increase your marks. As a results respondents gave several strategies to aid in developing content during writing. The respondents are indicated as follows.

*(Help students to select a writing mode upon which to focus. Each writing mode varies slightly in purpose and style, making it vital you select one on which to focus as to not confuse young writing pupils. Start with simple modes, such as narrative writing and short description essays. Advance to more complex forms, such as compare-contrast essays and research-based compositions, BSHSET#9).*



*(Present clear examples of what the resulting composition should look like. If possible, use samples of writing in that mode produced by children of the same age as these samples more closely approximate what your pupils will be capable of producing, BSHSET#4).*

*(Explain the concept of the audience to your pupils, providing them with examples of how the audience matters within the context of writing. Ask pupils to consider how they speak varies depending upon who they are talking. Explain that audience writing is similar to this*

*and that they should modify how they speak depending on who they are trying to reach, BSHSET#10).*

*(Discuss the writing process. Provide pupils with a graphic representation of this process, hanging a poster or signs depicting each step of this process on your classroom wall for students to reference as they move through the steps, BSHSET#2).*

*(Provide students with graphic organizers for brainstorming and organizing. Begin with a web, asking students to place their topics in the centre of the web and adding off-shoots that elaborate on the concept. Select graphic organizers appropriate for your selected writing mode to help students further organize their information, BSHSET#7).*

*(Assist students in transferring information from planning sheets to the essay itself through drafting. Instruct students to lay their planning sheets out beside them and transfer the information, expanding their notes into paragraphs, to produce a complete written work, BSHSET#1).*

*(Pair students and allow them to peer revise papers. If your students have no previous editing experience, practice this skill by moving*

*through some examples before asking them to engage in peer revision, BSHSET#3).*

*(Review second drafts yourself to look for additional errors in need of correction. Look over each composition yourself, allowing students to benefit from your expertise and a keen eye for errors. Instruct students to word process papers to create polished final drafts. If students have no experience creating word processing documents, assist them in opening and formatting one of these documents, BSHSET#5).*

*(Allow for sharing of work to promote student pride in their written creations. Either allow students to share their work or place the work on display allowing others to view each student composition, BSHSET#8).*

According to Richards (1990), teachers are to develop assessments that can help identify what skills students can display and which skills they need to improve. Have students perform different types of writing assignments to get a better idea of the range of their skills. Students can be introduced to when, how and why to use the chosen strategy. Students may be asked to reflect on the writing process, their writing skills and the areas they think they need to improve.

Teachers should model the use of the strategy so students can understand each step (Kapka & Oberman, 2001). The teacher may use the ‘think aloud’ technique of modelling so that students are aware of how the strategy is being used during the process of writing as well as modelling self-regulation strategies. The teacher may 74

model the use of mnemonics, graphic organizers and other aids that can act as supports to the students as they begin to use a strategy.

In conclusion, students should be able to practice strategies with their teacher's support and guidance. Scaffolds and feedback can be provided and the students can slowly become more independent as they become more comfortable with the strategies that aid in easy writing (Walker, Shippen, Alberto, Houchins, & Cihak, 2005). The strategies provided in this discussion are to aid students to compose their writings more consciously in school and out of school.





## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

The study sought to explain student difficulties composition writing in Bawku Senior High School. Chapter five presented a summary of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for policy implications.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

A case study was conducted using a mixed-method approach to investigate students' difficulty in the composition writing at the Bawku Senior High School. Purposive and simple random sampling was used to select 200 students and 10 English language teachers for the study. Due to the approach adopted, quantitative data was analyzed and presented in the table and content analysis was done on the qualitative data. Based on the analysis performed, the findings are summarized as follows.

#### Objective One

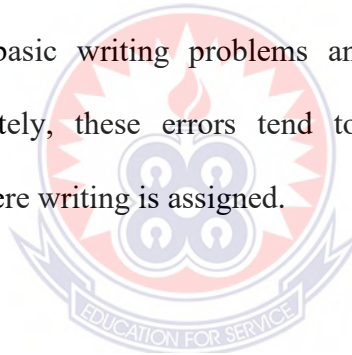
**Identify the challenges of students that leads to poor writing skills in Bawku senior high school.**

The study found challenges of poor handwriting/ spelling skills/writing illegibly and difficulty in copying work or completing work on printed or written pages. It also found that students have difficulty taking notes from oral presentations and demonstrate writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities. The was in all hypothesis upheld by the majority of the respondents indicating the major flaws in the teaching and learning of English composition in the Bawku Senior High School.

It appeared that 74% of students show writing that does not follow lines on a paper, writes too small or too large, writes too light or too hard, incorrect pen grip, does not 76

visually track writing, writes letters or numbers backwards or upside down and mixes capital and lower case letters inappropriately. The evidence shows 82% of respondents upheld that students have difficulty copying from the board, difficulty copying from a book or other printed material, difficulty filling out forms and difficulty completing fill-in blank worksheets.

The finding included that 68% majority of students are unable to write homework assignments correctly. Most of the time, writing is too slow to get lecture points on a paper. Some students take notes but are unable to distinguish important information from extraneous information. Others reverse or ignore numbers, parts of sentences and/or whole words taking notes. Finally, 65% consented to students showing severe grammatical or other basic writing problems and have difficulty with writing assignments. Unfortunately, these errors tend to persist and they are seldom addressed in courses where writing is assigned.



## **Objective Two**

### **Examine the effects of poor writing skills to students at the Bawku senior high school.**

The study found based on objective two that students have been negatively affected by the challenges of poor writing skills leading to the development of low Self-Confidence in most students. The study found that most students are unable to express themselves in writing across other subjects. Others are unable to express their ideas through communication with the overall effect being scoring poor grades in test, assignments and examinations.

Considering the evidence gathered, the study found that 69% of student feels disrespectful in an educational institute when he experiences some deficiencies in his or her writing skills. If one observes that all classmates can write the essays and assignments effectively, then he may feel embarrassed due to poor writing skills.

On the face of the evidence, the study found that 74% of the respondents consented to their inability to express themselves in other subjects' aside English Language. It is important to stress that every subject including Mathematics requires a level of writing to substantiate the idea one is expressing.

The study found that majority 78% upheld that students have problems expressing their ideas through communication as a result of their inability to write well. In school, students are taught to read and write as basic tenets of literacy upholding the purpose of education. Therefore, if you have good writing skill then you would be able to communicate your ideas or issue easily

The study found that the majority 70% of the respondents consented to poor performances as a result of the challenges in writing at school. Inability to write well is detrimental to every student at any level and consequently could lead to poor performances as evident in the respondents' views.

### **Objective Three**

#### **Indicate strategies to improve students' writing skill in Bawku senior high school.**

Teachers in the study area had years of experience and good qualifications, but considering the challenges and the subsequent effects on students, strategies were sought for the development of good writing skill as it is crucial for the success of a 78

student. The study found per the West African Examinations Council Chief Examiners (WAEC) reports (2019) issued on the conduct of English Language examinations that four areas are considered: the content, the organization, the expression and the mechanical accuracy. Teachers spelt out strategies that are used in developing the four aspects.

### **(I) Strategies for reinforcing Mechanical Accuracy skills**

The study found that mechanical accuracy takes 10 marks out of 50 and ways that the teacher can help students overcome the mechanical barriers of writing include dictation, role assignment, task responsibility, pre-cued spellings on prompt cards where students choose their topic, generation of word list that will be written on a chart or chalkboard for future reference.

### **(II) Strategies for reinforcing and developing expression writing skills in students.**

The study found based on the assessment criteria in the West African Examinations Council used in school, expression in composition writing takes the largest marks of 20. The strategies found to be effective in reinforcing expression are that teachers allow students to use a dictionary or personal word book to look up the spelling of unknown words which is an appealing approach. Another strategy is to allow students to work in small periods rather than spending hours at a time, begin with a brainstorming stage where ideas about the subject are written down. Also, student having spelling problems are allowed to use a computer if available. Organizing ideas from the brainstorming to an organizational model in the form of a story map, a timeline, an outline, organizational software also works better. The study also found that encouraging the student to elaborate on which ideas need to be included in the 79

assignment within the organizational model works well. Students are made to begin writing first/rough draft from the model and edit for vocabulary usage, sentencing, grammatical constructions, mechanics of writing (spelling, capitals, punctuation, paragraphing) are important in expressing their ideas better.

### **(III) Strategies for reinforcing and developing organizational writing skills in students.**

The study found that it is important to organizing ideas in composition despite it having the least mark (5) in compositions. It is prudent teachers take the necessary steps to teach their students concise skills to aid them to perform better academically.

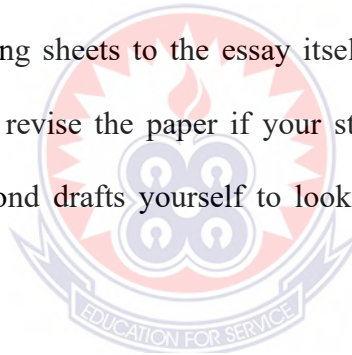
The study found that strategies such as promoting peer collaboration in class ensure that students organize their thoughts well in the planning stage to generate ideas together before writing. Teaching a self-checking strategy is very important in getting students to organize their ideas well especially when a student is producing the final draft, the teacher should teach a self-checking strategy that the student can use when editing their work. Concern about correctness during the planning or drafting stages can interfere with fluency and idea generation as a self-checking strategy also improves the readability of the message.

### **(IV) Strategies for reinforcing and developing content skills in students.**

The study found based on the marking scheme in the WAEC examinations, that student fight for 15 marks from the examiner under content and that positive results depend on many factors, including the accompanying instruction. The potential (or theoretical) benefits of computer-assisted writing include easing the physical demand of writing; making letters and sentences visible on the screen, thereby helping to focus the student's attention on the text; revising without tedious recopying; making

the text more legible to the teacher, thereby facilitating assistance; facilitating collaboration between student and peers in cooperative writing; and producing a neat, attractive product that promotes the student's self-image as a writer.

The study found several general strategies to aid in developing content during writing that include: Helping students to select a writing mode upon which to focus. Present clear examples of what the resulting composition should look like. Explain the concept of the audience to your pupils, providing them with examples of how the audience matters within the context of writing. Discuss the writing process and provide students with a graphic representation of this process. Provide students with graphic organizers for brainstorming and organizing. Assist students in transferring information from planning sheets to the essay itself through drafting. Pair students and allow them to peer revise the paper if your students have no previous editing experience. Review second drafts yourself to look for additional errors in need of correction.



## **5.2 Conclusions**

The study concluded the following:

1. There are challenges of poor handwriting/ spelling skills/writing illegibly and difficulty in copying work or completing work on printed or written pages, students difficulty in note-taking from oral presentations and demonstrating of writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities are present the teaching and learning of English composition in the Bawku Senior High School.
2. Students have been negatively affected by the challenges of poor writing skills leading to the development of low Self-Confidence inability to express themselves in

writing across other subjects or express ideas through communication with the overall effect detrimental to academic success.

3. The strategies provided in this discussion are to aid students to compose their writings in a more purposeful way in and out of school. Students should practice the strategies with their teacher's support and guidance with scaffolds and feedback provided and students slowly becoming more independent as they become more comfortable with the strategies that aid in easy writing.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Findings**

On the bases of the conclusions drawn in the research and the literature reviewed, the following are recommended.

1. Teachers' and students' attitude should be enhanced by organizing writing contests can be organized and best writers and instructors rewarded.
2. Teachers should encourage learners to write regularly, by giving them tasks that motivate them and guiding them through the topics given with resources for writing should be provided by schools and their use be monitored.
3. Additionally, the Ghana Education Service should consider posting more teachers to the study area since the area suffers an acute shortage of English language teachers.

### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies**

Since the study is a case study and limited to the Bawku Senior High School, it is suggested that further study be conducted in other senior high schools within the Upper East Region to ascertain the extent to which writing compositions is carried out.

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## APPENDICES

### STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

You are selected as respondents in a case study investigating student's difficulty in composition writing in the Bawku senior high school. It is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Education degree in the Faculty of Foreign Languages Education and Communication, University of Education, Winneba. Your contribution is of immense help in ensuring success. You are reminded that the information you shall provide is kept confidential, and you remain anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and deserves the right to leave this study at will. In case you need legal counsel on the interpretation of any issue on this questionnaire, one shall be made available without a cost to you.

**Kindly give the appropriate responses to these questions.**

#### Section A - Bio-Data of Respondents

1. Gender                      Male                       Female
2. Age Range                      Below 14 years                       15 - 17 years                       Above 17 years

#### Section B

Identify the challenges of students that leads to poor writing skills in Bawku senior high school.

3. *There are challenges of* Poor handwriting/ spelling skills/writing illegibly

Strongly Agree  Agree  No opinion  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

4. *There is* difficulty with copying or completing work on a printed page

Strongly Agree  Agree  No opinion  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

5. Students have difficulty taking notes from oral presentations

Strongly Agree  Agree  No opinion  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

6. Students demonstrates writing skills inconsistent with verbal abilities

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

### Section C

Examine the effects of poor writing skills to students at the Bawku senior high school.

7. Students have low Self-Confidence

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

8. Students often score poor grades in test, assignments and examinations

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

9. Students are unable to express themselves in writing across other subjects

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

10. Students have Problems Expressing their Ideas through Communication Skills

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

### Section D

Demonstrate strategies to improve students' writing skill in Bawku senior high school.

11. Teachers should reinforce and develop mechanical & accuracy writing skills.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

12. Teachers should reinforce and develop expression writing skills in students.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

13. Teachers should reinforce and develop organizational writing skills in students.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

14. Teachers should reinforce and develop content skills in students.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] No opinion [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

] Thank you

## APPENDIX B

### TEACHERS' INTERVIEW GUIDE (QUALITATIVE)

You are selected as respondents in a case study investigating student's difficulty in composition writing in the Bawku senior high school. It is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Education degree in the Faculty of Foreign Languages Education and Communication, University of Education, Winneba. Your contribution is of immense help in ensuring success. You are reminded that the information you shall provide is kept confidential, and you remain anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and deserves the right to leave this study at will. In case you need legal counsel on the interpretation of any issue on this questionnaire, one shall be made available without a cost to you.

**Kindly respond by answering the questions posed to the best of your abilities**

#### Section A - Bio-Data of Respondents

3. Sex                                      Male [ ]                                      Female [ ]

Teaching Qualification B. Ed/BSc Degree                                      M.Ed/M.Sc degree                                      any other

Teaching experience 0-5 yrs                                      6-10yrs                                      11-15yrs                                      16yrs and above

#### Section B - Methods to improve students' writing skill

1. How do you reinforce and develop mechanical & accuracy writing

skills? 94

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2. How do you reinforce and develop expression writing skills in students?

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3. How do you reinforce and develop organizational writing skills in students?

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4. How do you reinforce and develop content skills in students?

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