Secondary Teachers Perception of Formative Writing Assessment and its Influence on Their Practice

By

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January, 2017
I, Bavakure Ruth, hereby declare that this is my original work and has never been presented to any institution for any award.

Signature of Candidate  …………………………

Name of Candidate   Bavakure Ruth

Date                  …………………………. 
Approval

This dissertation titled “Assessing Writing in the Secondary English Language Classroom: Teachers Perception of Formative Assessment and its Influence on their Practices” has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

Signature of Supervisor ..............................................

Name of Supervisor Mulumba. M. (Ph.D)

Date .................................................................
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Mary Bavakure, my brothers; Hillary and Austair, my sisters; Janet, Joy and Peace and my friend, Amanda. May God bless you for your support.
Acknowledgement

Special thanks go to my supervisor, Mulumba. M (Ph.D), who dedicated a lot of his time and professional expertise to guide, advice and encourage me during the crucial time of putting this piece of work together. I am most grateful. I recognize lectures in the language department especially Robinah Kyeyune (Ph.D) and Prof. Ssebbunga Masembe, for advice during my research.

I also thank family members and friends for moral and monetary support. May God bless you all abundantly.
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### Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>UNEB</td>
<td>Uganda National Examinations’ Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CK</td>
<td>Content Knowledge</td>
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<td>PCK</td>
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<td>ELL</td>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
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<td>IRE</td>
<td>Initiate Respond Evaluate</td>
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Abstract

**KEYWORDS:** Formative Writing Assessment Practices, Teacher Perception, Uganda.

This study sought to investigate how teachers perceived Formative writing Assessment and how this impacted on their practice. It was carried out in Kampala district involving six teachers and eighteen students. The study was guided by the following questions:

- What are the language teachers’ current conceptions about assessment in general and about formative writing assessment in particular?
- How do English language teachers implement questioning and feedback (assessment practices) in their classrooms?
- How do English language teachers respond pedagogically to formative writing assessment data?

Data were collected from the participants using in-depth interviews, observations and documents. Data were analysed using themes and descriptive statistics in this study. These themes were decoded into smaller sub-themes under each main theme. The study found that teachers in this study had no knowledge of how to implement Formative writing Assessment in their classrooms. Practitioners need to be re-trained on how to implement the Formative Assessment policy in schools.
Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

This chapter gives highlight on background, problem, purpose, objectives, and research questions of the study. The scope and significance of the study are also explained.

1.1 Background

This section presents historical, theoretical, conceptual and contextual backgrounds of the study.

1.1.1 Historical Perspective. Formative assessment is as old as teaching itself. Studies of Bloom (1969) and William (2011) claim Socrates as an early practitioner because he gave his students probing and provocative questions which helped them reflect on their learning. However the term ‘formative assessment’ is traced back to Scriven (1967) who coined the words “formative” and “summative” to indicate differences in both the goals for collecting evaluation information and how this information was used. Scriven explained that while a program was still in progress; information could be gathered and used to change that program. This was called “formative evaluation”. However, once a program ended, the information collected would be used to determine whether the goals of the program had been met. This was called ‘summative evaluation’.

Benjamin Bloom was among the first people to apply the concepts of formative versus summative in education (Bloom, Hastings & Madaus, 1971). The studies laid a foundation for mastery learning. In 1977, the study indentified two elements of formative learning that is feedback for students and corrective conditions for all important components of learning. Formative assessment however became popular in 1998 when Paul and Dylan completed a meta-
analysis of more than 250 research studies on the topic. Their studies paved way for formative assessment in many classrooms all over the world today.

In Uganda, the formative assessment policy was introduced in (1998) by the Uganda National Policy Review Commission. The Ministry of Education and Sports therefore decided to give the job of interpreting and implementing continuous assessment to Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). Uganda National Examinations Board interpreted continuous assessment as having both elements of summative as well as formative and started training teachers to carry out continuous assessment. Uganda National Examinations Board termed formative use of continuous assessment as “instructional continuous assessment” and summative use of continuous assessment as “official continuous assessment”, (UNEB, nd: 1 quoted in Nakabugo, 2003). However, according to Nakabugo (2003) they ended up only emphasizing the summative aspects of continuous assessment and ignored the formative use of continuous assessment. This resulted into formative assessment being weak in policy as well as in practice.

1.1.2 Theoretical Perspective. Theories underpinning this study are Constructivist and Scaffolding as proposed by Bruner in (1950) and (1966) respectively. The Theory of Scaffolding was introduced in 1950 by Jerome Bruner; he used the term scaffolding to refer to how young children are helped to acquire a language by their parents. A scaffold is a temporary framework that is used to support learning and is slowly removed as the learner gains more autonomy. Scaffolds may include resources, tasks, templates/guides or guidance. A scaffold is not meant to take away the challenge from a task but rather to help a learner work within the Zone of Proximal Development.
As an educational term, scaffolding was first employed by Bruner and his colleagues (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). They explained that scaffolding is "a process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90). Bruner told Cazden (1983), that scaffolding would perform like a ratchet: The adult helps to hold a goal "in focal attention" (p. 6). Ninio and Bruner (1978) commented on how parents are able to understand and interpret "an astonishing variety of responses" (p. 8) from their children and concluded this should be transferred to the classroom.

Scaffolding operates on two levels. The first level is soft scaffolding also referred to as contingent scaffolding where the scaffold is offered depending on the needs of each individual in the classroom. There is also is the hard scaffold where the learners are assisted to deal with difficult tasks. Here the scaffold is planned in advance. Bottom line is that it is up to the teacher to know when to give the scaffold, what type of scaffold to use and when to remove the scaffold.

Three essential features have been identified for scaffolding to be successful:

1. There should be collaborative interaction between teacher (the expert) and the learner. (the novice)

2. Learning needs to take place within the learner’s Zone of Proximal Development

3. This support should be removed gradually as the learner becomes more autonomous.

Basing on this theory, formative assessment, which is in line with scaffolding has the potential to help learners improve their writing skills. The researcher therefore sought to discover how formative writing assessment had been interpreted by teachers and how it was being implemented in the writing classrooms in Uganda.
In addition to this, scaffolding being a metaphor has been subject to different interpretations by teachers. Scaffolding can therefore lead to both good and bad practice. For example a teacher who misinterprets scaffolding as thinking for the learner is likely to use teacher centered approaches in class therefore the question remains, what sort of support is sufficient without taking away a child’s creativity? This leads us to the second theory that guided my study.

The constructivist theory stipulates that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current/past knowledge. The learner selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions, relying on a cognitive structure to do so. Cognitive structure provides meaning and organization to experiences and allows the individual to "go beyond the information given" (http://www./Psychology.org). On the basis of this theory, this study suggested that teachers were aware of the advantages of formative assessment, therefore their current assessment practices could be related to how they (the teachers) constructed their own ideas on what the role of assessment is in the life of the learner that is what they themselves believe is the purpose of assessment.

1.1.3 Conceptual perspective. The major concepts in this study are: assessment, formative assessment, writing, perception, influence and practices. Brown (2000) defines assessment as an ongoing process. “Whenever a student responds to a question, offers a comment or tries out a new structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the student’s performance (p.4). While in this study it will mean, the processes a teacher goes through to gather data both during and after instruction.
Brown (2003) defines formative assessment as evaluating students in the process of “forming” their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. Heritage (2007) describes it as a systematic process to continuously gather evidence about learning. In this study formative assessment will mean both oral and written feedback that a teacher gives to the learners during the writing process.

Hornby (1974: 996) states that writing is in the sense of the verb ‘write’. To write is to make letters or other symbols (egideographs) on a surface, especially with a pen or a pencil on a paper the term of ability is defined as skill or power. Concisely, writing ability is the skill to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings to other people in written symbols to make other people or readers understand the ideas conveyed. In this study however, the researcher looked at composition writing which Kyeyune (1989) defines as the exercise of writing on a topic in which the student is called upon to exercise his power to think, and using the ideas thus formulated in his mind to write his reaction to the topic. In this study writing will refer to all the written exercises given to the students by the teachers during instruction or the lesson.

Wallace (1999) defines practice as an application of knowledge about the subject and teaching in teaching situations. That is an on–going engagement between received knowledge and experimental knowledge. Assessment practices in this study were limited to questioning and feedback by marking. These are formative methods used in the classroom to establish the level of students’ difficulties or understanding of a particular concept or idea with the purpose of helping students to succeed in learning (Ainscow, 1988; Popham, 1999).

According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perception (2011), Perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of the environment by organizing and interpreting sensory
information. In this study, it meant teachers’ understanding of formative assessment and how their understanding guided their practice.

1.1.4 Contextual Perspective. There is an outcry about English language in Uganda (Ssebbunga–Massembe, 2000…). Specifically, writing skill leaves a lot to be desired. Employers complain that workers who have gone through our education system exhibit poor writing skills in writing reports, minutes, application letters and filling forms (Ssebbunga–Massembe, 2000; Ojoburu, 2007; Bamwoyeraki 2000; Kyeyune 1989; UNEB REPORTS, 1980-1999). In 1982 a conference in Kyambogo concluded that learners were exposed to very stereotyped kinds of writing which did not help them learn the much desired writing skills. Ssebbunga–Massembe among other reasons mentions the obsession with examination excellence which has led to some skills which are unexamined like listening and speaking to be ignored by teachers in class.

Teachers in Uganda are more concerned with exams and tests. For instance, some schools subject students to beginning of term, mid term and end of term tests before they are even taught (Opolot-Okurut, 2010). Teaching writing is conducted in what McGregor (1971) considers the worst method. Writing which is an individual activity is conducted as if all learners have the same writing style. They are given the same topic to write about, write at the same time and are expected to hand in at the same time. After this process the teacher takes the books, corrects them with the same marking guide and returns them at the same time. This is what Kroll (2001) refers to as the traditional paradigm. To make it worse students are encouraged to write artificially using insincere and verbose language because that is what is marked in the exams. This they say makes students lose interest in writing and thereby their writing skill not developed. It is therefore no wonder that even some senior four leavers’ can hardly do something
simple like writing letters asking for vacancies in senior five after going through our education system for four years! (Ssebbunga-Masembe, 2000).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Writing is of particular importance in school and out of school. Students demonstrate what they have learnt through writing. Knowledge of other skills such as listening and reading is also demonstrated in writing. After school; writing is key in preparing reports, writing memos and effective communication at the places of employment. Unfortunately, students’ writing in Uganda leaves a lot to be desired (Ojoburu, 2007; Ssebbunga-Masembe, 2000; UNEB REPORTS, 1980-1999), (2000-2009). Students do not know how to write and even those at the university level who are expected to exhibit a certain level of proficiency are falling short.

This is of particular concern because not only is English language the medium of instruction but also a language of employment. In 2009, UNEB released a report that language problems continued to greatly hinder students' ability to interpret questions. Employers complain that school leavers are unable to write reports, cannot give directions, and cannot articulate ideas appropriately. Studies indicate that formative assessment is considered good practice because it helps a teacher know whether teaching is going well. According to Black and William (1998), formative assessment has the capacity to produce learning gains which exceed those derived from other educational interventions designed to raise attainment that is “an effect size of between .4 and .7, the equivalent of going from the 50th percentile to the 65th”. Formative assessment results in better learning because it gives a teacher specific data on how to plan interventions and how to target teaching to pupils needs. A teacher who uses formative assessment results does not rely on guess work but targets learning to pupils needs (Fisher &
It has also been suggested that assessment can be used as a lever of change in improving the quality of education (Kellaghan, 2000). The question that this study sought to answer was why is it weak in practice? The researcher tried to find out if teachers’ perception could be one of the reasons and challenged teachers to reflect on why they assess the way they do.

Furthermore, despite the importance of assessment, we did not know a great deal about how teachers assessed students and how they used that knowledge to guide learning. Research indicates that teachers spend most of their time concentrating on exams and tests (Opolot-Okurut, 2010; Black and William, 1998). These tests measure the extent to which a pupil is able to memorize and problem solving skills are ignored, it has also been noted that frequent summative tests have a negative impact on pupils views of themselves as learners (Higgins, 2011).

Uganda has done a lot to support and train teachers, however there is need to collect data on what exactly takes place in the classroom in order to adequately help teachers with the challenges they are facing in the classroom. Uganda needs teachers who can conduct classroom assessment that will inform teaching and learning. The study sought to understand the perception of English language teachers on formative assessment and how they conducted classroom assessment. Many researchers have showed concern about the poor writing skills of our learners (Kyeyune, 1989; Bamwoyeraki, 2002; Ojoburu, 2007). However none of these studies particularly attributed the state of affairs to assessment, a gap which the proposed study intended to fill.
1.3 Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine how formative assessment in a writing classroom is carried out in secondary schools by English language teachers. The specific objectives were:

- To establish language teachers’ current conceptions about assessment in general and about formative writing assessment in particular.
- To establish how English language teachers implement questioning and feedback (assessment practices) in their classrooms.
- To find out how teachers respond pedagogically to formative writing data.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the language teachers’ current conceptions about assessment in general and about formative writing assessment in particular?
2. How do English language teachers implement questioning and feedback (assessment practices) in their classrooms?
3. How do English language teachers respond pedagogically to formative writing assessment data?

1.5 Scope

Geographically, the study concentrated on Kampala District. Kampala is found in central Uganda and it is the capital city of the country. It is bordered by Wakiso District to the south, the west and the north and by Mukono District to the east. Practicing teachers of English language and senior three students served as respondents. In content, the study focused on teachers’ feedback and questioning skills, teachers’ views and understanding of formative writing assessment and teachers’ pedagogical response to assessment data in the language classroom.
1.6 Significance

This study will help teachers, teacher trainers, schools, UNEB and future researchers. Teachers will be challenged to reflect on their assessment practices thereby improving on the practice. Teacher trainers will use the information in this study to identify the reasons behind the gap between theory and practice and find strategies to reduce this gap. Schools will use this information to develop assessment guidelines for their schools. UNEB will some of the information to implement government policy on assessment. Theoretically, the study will prompt more researches in the area having contributed to literature and methodology for such future studies.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter gives the theoretical review, conceptual framework and literature related to the respective objectives.

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was based on two theories; scaffolding and constructivism by Jerome Bruner. Scaffolding theory was first introduced by Jerome Bruner in (1950) who was a student of Lev Vygotsky. He used the term scaffolding to refer to how young children are helped to acquire a language by their parents. A scaffold is a temporary framework that is used to support learning and is slowly removed as the learner gains more autonomy. Scaffolds may include resources, tasks, templates/guides or guidance. A scaffold is not meant to take away the challenge from a task but rather to help a learner work within the Zone of Proximal Development.

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Scaffolding operates on two levels. The first level is soft scaffolding also referred to as contingent scaffolding where the scaffold is offered depending on the needs of each individual in the classroom. There is also the hard scaffold where the learners are assisted to deal with difficult tasks. Here the scaffold is planned in advance. Bottom line is that it is up to the teacher to know when to give the scaffold, what type of scaffold to use and when to remove the scaffold. Three essential features have been identified for scaffolding to be successful

1. There should be collaborative interaction between teacher (the expert) and the learner (the novice)

2. Learning needs to take place within the learner’s Zone of Proximal Development.

3. This support should be removed gradually as the learner becomes more autonomous.

Basing on this theory, formative assessment is a form of scaffolding because the teacher is trying to get information on the best way to help the learner achieve what they cannot achieve on their own. Formative assessment helps the teacher decide what sort of support to give the learner, when this support is most effective and of course when to let the learners work on their own. This means that a teacher ought to be competent and know what sort of support to offer in a writing classroom without suffocating a child’s creativity in class. This led me to the second theory that guided my study-constructivism.

Constructivism is basically a theory-based on observation and scientific study - about how people learn. It says that people are part of their own learning; they construct rather than acquire knowledge, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. When we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experience, maybe changing what we believe, or maybe discarding the new information as irrelevant. In any case, we are active creators of our own knowledge. To do this, we must ask questions, explore, and
assess what we know. Students and in my study-teachers, are not blank slates upon which knowledge is etched. They come to learning situations with already formulated knowledge, ideas, and understandings. This previous knowledge is the raw material for the new knowledge.

Basing on this theory, many Ugandan teachers are taught about assessment in the training centres but being creators of knowledge themselves the interpretation and implementation of what is learnt is left to the teacher him/herself. The assumption is therefore that what goes on in the writing classroom is as a result of what the teacher has interpreted as the best practice. The knowledge we construct is influenced by the world we live in and our experiences. It has been observed that many teachers teach the way they were taught and arguably one would say teachers assess the way they were assessed. Teaching therefore draws on a personal experience and any new information given to a teacher must first be weighed and if it fits in the current schema, it is accepted if it does not, it gets rejected by the teacher. Although knowledge is constructed by individuals, dialoging with others is equally critical in knowledge construction. Therefore the environment a teacher works in will help in defining a teacher’s assessment practices.

Teachers of writing therefore are likely to assess the learners the way they were assessed or the way they understand formative assessment. This will determine whether learners continue writing or abandon it all together. Since our interest is in making sure that learners actually develop the writing skill, our focus is to make sure that teachers assess in the right way. This can be achieved if teachers are challenged to reflect on their practices either when they are still at teacher training centers or during continuous professional development workshops. One cannot change what one does not know. According to Claxton’s observation:
All students when they arrive at a teacher-training course have a personal theory about education, schools, children, teaching and learning; what is important and what is not ... They have their own intuitive, largely tacit, largely unexamined set of beliefs, attitudes and values that are variously idiosyncratic, partial, simplistic, archaic and rigid.

(Claxton, 1984 quoted in Smith and Alred, 1994: 105)

This observation is not limited to student teachers but in my opinion even practicing teachers have their own perceptions and beliefs and these may determine a teachers classroom approaches and a teacher’s willingness to experiment with others.
2.2 Conceptual Framework

Independent variable (Teachers’ perception) | Dependent variable (formative practices)
--- | ---
Teacher’s beliefs, understanding, thinking and interpretation | Teacher knowledge and practice
- Provide feedback
- Monitor students writing progress
- Scaffold learning
- Pedagogically respond to data

Extraneous variables
- Teacher qualification
- Teaching facilities
- School assessment procedures

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework relating teachers’ perceptions to formative assessment
Source: Brunner, (1950 & 1966…) Ideas adopted from the scaffolding and constructivist theories

The framework in Figure 2.1 suggests that teachers’ perception is conceptualized as three characteristics, namely what the teacher believes, understands and interprets as formative assessment. Formative practice is conceptualized as teacher providing feedback, monitoring students writing progress, scaffolding learning and pedagogically responding to data. Figure 2.1 further hypothesizes that teachers’ perceptions either hinder or enable formative practice.
2.3 Related Literature

2.3.1 Teachers’ Conceptions of Assessment. Teachers play a crucial role in whether an educational programme will be successful or unsuccessful (Ayala et al., 2008; De Bruijn & Leeman, 2011; Davis, Beyer, Forbes, & Stevens, 2011; Gardner et al., 2010). Since assessment practices are always changing, it is important that teachers conceptions keep pace or else they end up hindering the implementation of the assessment innovations (Ayala et al., 2008; Brown, 2004; Webb & Jones, 2009; Yorke, 2003).

Teachers’ assessments of student behavior and performance, among others, are shaped by the theories they have in relation to teaching, assessment, and the nature of learning. Therefore, visible attention devoted to the beliefs teachers have and the way in which those beliefs influence teaching are central for professional development (Borko, Mayfield, Marion, Flexer, & Cumbo, 1997). For instance, Rueda and Garcia (1994) investigated the attitudes and beliefs of three groups of third and fourth grade classroom teachers concerning the reading assessment of Latino language minority students in urban classrooms of California. Results showed a discrepancy between the beliefs of teachers and those underlying many of the new educational initiatives in assessment and instruction.

In another study, Delandshere and Jones (1999) examined three elementary teachers’ conceptions about assessment. Results indicate that teachers’ beliefs are shaped by externally defined purposes of assessment; by what they perceive as the official school curriculum and their position with regard to subject matter; and by how they understand learning and learners. Brown (2003) also conducted a study among 525 New Zealand primary school teachers to analyze the assessment practices and their relationship to learning, curriculum, and teacher efficacy. The results showed that teachers had multiple, correlated conceptions, and that complex models were
needed to understand teachers’ thinking about the nature and purpose of assessment, teaching, and curriculum. Brown concludes that to ensure success in the implementation of any new assessment policy or practice, it is necessary to take into account the complex structure of teachers’ conceptions of assessment.

These studies highlight the need to establish the connection between what teachers believe about assessment and how these beliefs shape their practices. Since different conceptions lead to different assessment practices, institutional efforts to promote shared understanding of assessment criteria would be pointless if teachers’ beliefs are not taken into account. Therefore, it is not only crucial to reveal those beliefs, but also to get teachers’ aware of such conceptions which may hinder adoption of new assessment innovations in an attempt to foster reflection and guide them toward change. However, all these studies were done at the elementary level suggesting a gap for studies at a secondary level. Hence the need for this study.

Munoz, Palacio and Escobar (2011) studied the beliefs of 62 teachers working in an adult English program at a university in Colombia. The study concluded that assessment improves learning. However, since learning is as a result of various factors such as the ability of the learners, leaning pace and pressure to hit deadlines, it is often easy for teachers to assume that leaning is taking place when it isn’t. This finding therefore highlights the need for the study where teachers are given an opportunity to reflect on their practice and make the desirable changes. Tang and Harrison (2011) studied how 50 tutors who were supporting an online university English course perceived, understood and interpreted the processes of assignment feedback. Results indicate that teachers had divergent views. There were those who represented the traditional view of assessment. These emphasized the aspect of grading and measurement in
giving feedback. Where as some tutors believed that grades were not that important and focused on learner errors.

Gulikers et al. (2013) did a large scale survey on teachers’ assessment conceptions in the Netherlands. The collaborative action research study revealed that there was a strong correlation between conceptions and practices. This is in line with what Samuelowicz and Bain (2002) found in their study that teachers’ assessment methods are influenced by their views on teaching and learning. A mismatch between the teachers’ views and a certain mode of assessment is likely to result into a teacher rejecting that assessment in spite of its advantages. This means that there is a correlation between perspectives and practice. However, all these studies were conducted in European countries leaving a gap for the same study in an African country. A gap which this study proposed to fill.

Further, Woods (1996) recommends varied methods in studying teachers’ beliefs about assessment. To this end, Woods suggests elicitations such as logs, video-based recall, collection of lesson plans, and interview questions. Other researchers such as Cheung (2000) and Brown (2002) have also suggested different models for the study of teacher beliefs. Cheung, for instance, used a curriculum orientation inventory survey consisting of 20 items which were grouped into 4 major conceptions of assessment (i.e. academic, humanistic, technological, and social reconstruction). While Brown (2002) asserts that teachers’ conceptions about the process and purpose of assessment and the nature of teaching and learning affect all pedagogical acts. Brown (2002) developed a Teachers’ Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA) inventory based on the assumption that four major purposes were enough to understand teachers’ beliefs about the purposes of assessment.

- assessment is useful because it can provide information for improving instruction
• Assessment is necessary for making students accountable
• Assessment is necessary for making institutions accountable
• Assessment is irrelevant to teaching and learning

However, these methods yield different results at a large scale thus the need for the current study which would concentrate on a few teachers and give rich detailed data on their practice.

2.3.2 Formative Assessment Practices.

Questioning

The art of questioning is crucial to the practice of teaching because it helps a teacher understand what students know, what they need to know and what they have misunderstood Fisher & Frey (2011). This calls for teachers to reflect on the type of questions they ask in their classrooms and to also take note of the responses they get from the learners since these responses reveal whether learning is taking place or not (Black et al, 2013). Pedrosa de Jesus and Moreira (2009) studied the role of undergraduate science students questioning in the learning process in Portugal. With a cohort of 120 students, the study concluded that Students do not usually ask questions and classrooms are dominated by teacher centred approaches. This is dangerous because questions play an important role in the students learning. Questions reveal students thinking and help teachers iron out misconceptions during learning. This helps the teacher to teach learners according to their needs (Dillon 1986; Pedrosa de Jesus 1991). Through the formulation of meaningful questions, students become active rather than passive learners. These studies therefore highlight the need to study teacher questions in the writing classrooms

Crooks, (1988) did a review on the impact of classroom evaluation practices on students. His review focused on tests, adjunct questions in texts, and oral questioning by teachers in class.
His main conclusion was that “Too much emphasis has been placed on the grading function of evaluation and too little on its role in assisting students to learn” (p. 468). He concluded that this called for rebalancing of both grades and actual scaffolding of learning. Emphasizing grading had undesirable outcomes like reduced use of feedback to improve learning, poorer social relationships among the students and time wastage (p. 468).

Rowe (1974) studied elementary science classes in the USA. The study concluded that most teachers wait 0.9 seconds after asking students a question before answering it themselves. Such a short interval does not allow students to formulate answers. When teachers were given an opportunity to increase the wait time, there was a marked difference in students learning:

- Students provided longer answers
- Failure to respond to teachers questions decreased
- Students were more confident in their answers
- Some students even challenged other students answers
- There was a variety of responses to the same questions

This study therefore highlights the need to look into teacher practice because it brings about desirable changes for both the learners and the learners.

In 2003, Black et al also worked with a group of 24 science and mathematics teachers in the United Kingdom. Teachers were challenged to reflect on the type of questions they asked in class and results indicate that teachers practice of questioning improved and there was a marked improvement in learning. However, all these studies were done in European countries there creating a gap for the same studies to be done in Uganda.
On the Ugandan scene, some researchers tried to study teacher practice. For instance Nakabugo (2003) studied continuous assessment in primary education. With a closer look at 14 mathematics teachers, the study found that teachers dominate classroom discourse and as a result learners are passive. Tulugwa (2008) studied students and lectures perceptions of the current methods of assessment used in distance learning at Makerere University and came to the conclusion that most assessment was summative. She recommended that lectures should use assessment that requires use of high level problem solving skills to enhance the understanding of the learners; this is of course formative assessment. Mwebaza (2010) studied continuous assessment in Masaka District. His conclusions were not so far different. However none of these studies focused on English language. This left a gap which the proposed study intended to fill. This is because although the principles of formative assessment cut across all the subjects, the ways in which they manifest themselves in different subjects may differ, (Black et al 2002) this leaves a gap for a study in writing.

Furthermore, Kuze & Shumba (2011) using a qualitative inquiry approach studied formative practices of teachers in Fort Beaufort in South Africa. With a sample of 5 teachers and 25 learners, the study came up with a conclusion that teachers have failed to interpret the government policy on formative assessment, they have therefore failed to apply it in their classrooms. These echo the findings of Susuwele-Banda (2005) who studied six mathematics teachers’ assessment perceptions and practices in Malawi. Both these studies found that the art of questioning still left a lot to be desired. Thereby creating a gap for the same studies to be conducted in Uganda.
Ramaphrasad (1983: 4) defines feedback as “information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way”. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) defined feedback interventions as “actions taken by (an) external agent(s) to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one’s task performance” (p. 255).

Studies by Black and William (1998) and Hattie and Timperley (2007), show the importance of giving feedback to students. Wingate (2010) studied the impact of formative feedback on the academic writing of 68 undergraduate students in London. Results showed that Students who read the feedback comments improved in areas where they had received criticism in their writing whereas the students who did not read the comments showed no improvement because the same weaknesses kept on manifesting in their writing. The study also uncovered some of the reasons why some students engaged with the feedback whereas others didn’t. One of the reasons mentioned is that some students didn’t think of themselves as able writers so they gave up. Conclusions of the study were that formative feedback can be effective in writing instruction if learners were encouraged to engage with it.

Borg and Deane (2011), using a case study research method discovered that one to one tutor support can help students to improve as writers. Similarly a study by Rickard et al. (2009) evaluating strategies used to support academic writing in a short writing course found that scaffolding writing helped the writers improve as writers and increased their writing confidence. Jackson (2009) also investigated the outcomes of university-led intensive residential writing retreats that included mentoring and peer-learning. Results indicate that poor writers become better when they receive intensive and continued support from the more experienced counterparts. In addition, learners ended up picking other skills like working independently and as a team. These studies highlight the need for scaffolding in the writing classroom.
However different studies have found that despite the numerous advantages of feedback, teachers rarely give feedback, don’t know how to give feedback and learners do not engage with feedback. Havness et al (2012) studied six upper secondary schools in Norway. Their focus was on how teachers were giving feedback in vocational training and the three core subjects: English, Norwegian and Mathematics. Results indicate that teachers gave feedback however this feedback was tied to grading. Secondly, students were not involved in giving feedback and the use of feedback was particularly weak. Students were not included in planning, setting criteria or discussing strategies for problem solving.

Similarly, Kluger and DeNis’s 1996 review of over 3000 studies about the impact of feedback on students learning highlighted some key points about feedback. Once received, an individual can respond in four different ways. One, an individual can change the behavior to reach the goal, change the goal, abandon the goal or simply reject the feedback. This has implications for both teachers and learners in that if learners do not take action or are unable to take action to close the knowledge gap the whole exercise of giving and receiving feedback will be a wastage of time! (Channock, 2000; Higgins et al., 2001).

Weaver (2006) conducted group discussions with students at a UK university and found that students ignored feedback when it was: (1) too general or vague, (2) lacked guidance, (3) focused on the negative, or (4) was unrelated to the assessment criteria (2006, 387–8). Higgins, Hartley, and Skelton (2002) discovered in a survey that only a small percentage of the respondents (33%) said they understood the criteria. The other percentage had no idea what was expected of them. These studies therefore highlight the need to study teacher practice and a closer look at their perception of feedback and how to engage effective feedback strategies.
Gibbs and Simpson (2003), from their quantitative study involving students (n = 776), found that students will only read the feedback if they feel it will help with the next assignment. This echoes Crooks (1988) review on the impact of classroom evaluation practices on students. His review focused on tests, adjunct questions in texts, and oral questioning by teachers in class. His main conclusion was that “Too much emphasis has been placed on the grading function of evaluation and too little on its role in assisting students to learn” (p. 468). He concluded that this called for rebalancing of both grades and actual scaffolding of learning. Emphasizing grading had undesirable outcomes like reduced use of feedback to improve learning, poorer social relationships among the students and time wastage (p. 468).

Another aspect that is likely to affect the giving of feedback could be teacher perception. The quality of feedback on student writing has been investigated in a number of studies (e.g. Mutch 2003; Rust 2002; Walker 2009). Some of these studies identified mismatches between teachers’ and students’ understanding of requirements of academic writing, as well as students’ inability to understand teachers’ comments on their writing (Hounsell 1987; Ivanic, Clark, and Rimmershaw 2000). Feedback comments, such as ‘structure’, ‘argument’ and ‘clarity’ were of little help to students, and even lecturers were found to have difficulty in explaining what a good argument would be (Lea and Street 1998). Therefore the comments ended up being of little help to the writers. Similarly, a study by Duers and Brown (2009) reveals that the nature of feedback can also affect the students understanding and learning. Sometimes according to this study teachers use unfamiliar vocabulary and incomprehensible words which makes learning difficult (Higgins et al., 2001).

Other studies have come up with reasons why learners may not be engaging with feedback. For instance drawing on the results of a large-scale questionnaire on tutor and learner
perceptions of tutor feedback on assignments across eight universities in Hong Kong, Carless (2006) discovered that tutors and learners had differing perceptions regarding feedback. The study unearthed that tutors believed they were giving detailed feedback whereas the students thought otherwise. Secondly, students did not think the feedback they received very useful whereas tutors held a contrary view. And thirdly the teachers’ misconception that learners were only interested in grades was not supported by findings from students. This highlights the need for this study as teachers need to know whether they are making impact or not. Clegg’s (2004) study, discovered teachers have different perceptions on how to give formative feedback. The study stresses the need for a systematic method of giving formative feedback if teachers are to engage in the practice. Samuelowicz and Bain (2002) suggest that teachers’ assessment methods are influenced by their views on teaching and learning. A mismatch between the teachers’ views and a certain mode of assessment is likely to result into a teacher rejecting that assessment in spite of its advantages. This means that there is a correlation between perspectives and practice thereby highlighting the need for this study.

However, all these studies were carried out in European countries highlighting the need for this study in Uganda. On the Ugandan scene, Charles Opolot-Okurut (2010) studied the challenges faced by mathematics teachers in instruction and assessment in Uganda. A sample of 80 primary teachers and 120 secondary teachers participated in the study. The study revealed that despite the numerous assessment students are rarely given feedback. One of the possible explanations for this inefficiency is the pressure to complete the syllabus and the fact that teachers are not sure of why they assess. However the study was conducted in mathematics leaving a gap for a similar study in English language.
2.3.3. Use of Data. Studies by Black and Wiliam (1998), Erickson (2007), Torrance and Pryor (1998) show that teachers have no clear understanding of assessment for formative purposes. Every form of assessment has its place in the learning of the students. Where as summative assessment helps to determine whether a student has achieved a certain level of competency after a certain period of learning for example after the end of term or year, formative assessment is intended to help close the gap between a learners current status and intended learning goals. Formative assessment data needs to be collected during learning to help a teacher make informed decisions before the lesson ends. Walgui and Hertitage (2012) contend that learning should be contingent. However contingent learning is dependant on continuous collection of data which is supposed to help teachers take the right pedagogic action.

Tomlinson and Moon (2010) agree that the teacher will be effective by persistent use of assessment. Research indicates that collecting data about ones own practice is becoming increasingly essential because data generated from assessment helps a teacher to chat the progress of the learner, provides a compass of forward planning, helps a teacher to pace teaching to mention but a few. Planning informed by assessment offers greater use of differentiation and is more flexible (Brooks, 2002).

Chang and Heritage (2012) analysed how 11 middle class teachers of English in California used assessment data. The results indicate that teachers do not have a clear understanding about assessment for formative purposes and their pedagogic response was limited to re-teaching which shows a limited view of contingent learning. A 12-year research by Foster and Poppers which was completed in (2009) had a lot to tell about mathematics teachers’ use of assessment data in the United States of America. Results indicate that teachers lacked in-depth professional preparation and lacked good models to help them with their practice, hence, the
need for this study. Teachers’ only pedagogical response to data was re-teaching a lesson which was not different from the original lessons. The researchers called for retraining of teachers on how to engage and re-engage the students during learning. In other words teachers lacked strategies of responding to assessment data.

Similarly, Munoz, Palacio and Escobar (2011), who studied the beliefs of 62 teachers working in an adult English program at a university in Colombia, discovered that teachers do not use assessment data results. When asked about the uses of assessment results, 39.3% and 13.1% of the teachers agreed that they make little use of the result. This showed that whereas teachers believed in assessment, they just lacked the ability to use assessment results in a practical way.

Havness et al (2012) studied six upper secondary schools in Norway. Their focus was on how teachers were giving feedback in vocational training and the three core subjects: English, Norwegian and Mathematics. Results show that systematic use of feedback as a support of students’ learning was a weak element in the educational practice. Teachers lacked systematic strategies for implementing feedback for future learning. However, all these studies were done in European countries which left a gap for similar studies in Uganda.

Other researchers have also had interest in continuous assessment and how it can enhance students’ performance. For example, Tulugwa (2008) studied students and lectures perceptions of the current methods of assessment used in distance learning at Makerere University and came to the conclusion that most assessment was summative. She recommended that lectures should use assessment that requires use of high level problem solving skills to enhance the understanding of the learners; this is of course formative assessment. Mwebaza (2010) studied continuous assessment in Masaka District while Nakabugo (2003) studied formative assessment in primary. However none of those studies particularly explained how teachers’ perception led to
practice and how formative assessment would help improve the writing skill, a gap which this study intended to fill. On the whole there was scanty literature on teacher use of assessment literature. Which left a gap that the study intended to fill.
Chapter Three

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the design, area of study, sampling, description of cases, methods and instruments, population sample, research method and tools, quality of tools, procedure and data management.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed case study design. This was as a result of the socialistic nature of the inquiry; that is, teachers’ perception of formative writing assessment and how it impacted on their practice. The design was also chosen because it would also offer an opportunity for intensive and in-depth analysis which would potentially be ignored by other designs. Data collected helped the researcher give a detailed descriptive analysis of teacher practice as observed in the classroom. Six language teachers constituted the cases where by each case could be appreciated individually. This is because each individual is believed to have certain peculiar details about teacher practice. At the same time, all six teaches constituted a case since they belonged to a bigger category of teachers who offered teaching services in Uganda. They therefore share an identity and offer a specialised service that makes them identifiable as a particular part of the whole system. This case generated data that revealed teachers perception and how this impacted on their practice. The data also gave an idea how this practice affected students writing skills.
3.2 Area of study

The study was conducted in six secondary schools in Kampala district. The choice of these schools was based on the fact that Kampala has a clear dichotomy of schools which perform well; those that perform moderately and those that perform poorly. These three categories made it possible to have a wider representation of the students’ population in the area of study. This aimed at increasing the validity of the results.

3.3 Population Sample

Six cases were studied. These were all teachers of English language in senior three. The six teachers had all undergone training as two had diplomas and the rest had degrees. Their teaching experience ranged from four to twenty years of teaching. (See table 4.1). In particular those who teach the writing skill were the respondents. Eighteen students also participated in this study. Each teacher was requested to pick three students from their class basing on the following criteria; one competent writer, one average writer and one poor writer for interview. Secondary school students, in particular senior three students, participated in the study because senior three is a level for intensive teaching of the four language skills (Integrated English Teaching Syllabus, 2008). It is also a class where students start writing frequently (Kyeyune, 1989) plus unlike the candidate classes, it is relatively free from examination pressure. This means that the teachers were likely to engage in formative rather than summative assessment, which was the focus of my study.
PHOTOGRAPH 1

Showing a teacher teaching students in a classroom as they get ready to write notes

PHOTOGRAPH 2

Shows learner doing the exercise after the lesson
3.4 Description of the Cases

The cases studied were named A B C D E F. B and F were selected from the best performing schools in Kampala. The rationale behind this was that such schools would have highly qualified teachers who would have unique practices in their classrooms. It was also assumed that such schools would have more supportive environment that would help teachers with the teaching of the writing skill. The next cases C and D were picked from average performing schools while A and E were picked from poor performing schools. It was hypothesized that teachers coming from different environments would have peculiar experiences that would contribute to the understanding of formative writing assessment.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sample of six schools was selected from the many schools in Kampala District because of the diversity of the schools. Kampala has a clear dichotomy of the schools which perform very well; those that perform moderately and those that perform poorly. Since many teachers prefer working in the city, the researcher was likely to find English language teachers in Kampala schools. Secondly the central region is among the first schools to be trained in use of assessment and it was hoped that teachers who practice formative assessment would be found here. Senior three learners were purposively chosen because in some schools, this it a time the writing skill is given special attention and separated from the rest of the language skills. Six teachers of writing and their classes were selected from the six schools, on the basis of the classes they were teaching. Teachers were requested to pick three students from their classes. One competent writer, one average writer and lastly one poor writer for interview.
3.6 Research Methods

The methods used were observation, interviews for both teachers and students and document analysis. Observation involved going to the teachers’ classes three times and watching them as they taught writing to the students. After the lesson, face to face interviews were carried out for both students and teachers. Teachers’ interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes while student interviews lasted about 20 minutes. The interviews were used for first-hand information (Kvale, 1990). The researcher also looked at students exercise books and analysed teachers’ method of giving feedback using an instrument of analysis (see appendix D). Other documents like teachers schemes of work were also analysed. The multiple data sources allowed for triangulation of data to reduce bias and at the same time helped the researcher develop a deeper understanding of the issues under study.

3.7 Research Tools

3.7.1 Lesson Observation Protocol. Creswell (2001) recommends the use of observational protocol as a method for recording notes. Lesson observation protocol (see appendix F) helped the researcher look at the lesson design, presentation of the lesson including assessment indicators such as oral feedback, teacher-student interaction, scaffolding strategies used by the teacher and opportunities for acting upon this feedback. During lesson observation special emphasis was placed on writing pedagogy in detail. The instrument facilitated capturing details on how these pedagogical acts worked together to develop the writing skills in learners.

3.7.2 The teachers’ interview protocol. This instrument (see appendix C) was used to establish teachers’ perceptions of formative writing assessment. It had nine items divided in three
categories. The first five questions sought to establish teacher understanding of formative writing assessment, the next three were to determine how this theory was being put in practice and the final questions determined the means that teachers used to collect assessment data and how they were using that data to help learners writing ability. This instrument was considered suitable in creating a conducive friendly environment that would enable collection of desired data.

3.7.3 The interview guide for learners. This instrument (see appendix E) aimed at documenting how students felt after receiving feedback from the teachers. It also aimed at establishing if this feedback helped them become better writers. The first items were meant to establish if they were actively involved in learning, if they were asked questions and if they were given opportunity to ask questions, if they received feedback the last part of items aimed at establishing how they acted on the feedback received. It was considered suitable because since learners are the recipients of teacher practice, they are in a better position of explaining how this impacts on their learning.; whether negatively or positively. It was also chosen to supplement and corroborate responses from the teachers.

3.7.4 Instrument for analyzing written feedback. The instrument used to analyse teachers written feedback aimed at establishing whether the feedback given was reflective of the best practice. It had four levels that is level one up to four where the lowest level indicated low quality feedback and level four indicated high level feedback that is reflective of best practice. Document analysis was be used to triangulate the information collected through observation and interview. Some of the other documents looked at were learners notebooks and teachers’ schemes of work (see appendix G and H).
3.8 Quality of Research Tools

In order to ascertain the validity of instruments, expert opinion was sought from the supervisor, lecturers, and peers on face, content and format of interview guides and lesson observation protocol. Supervisors, colleagues in the department and other lectures were consulted and they helped to identify errors and offered the opportunity to modify and improve the instruments. In addition a pilot study was done in one school within the same district that did not participate in the actual study. Following the pilot study, more errors were identified in the instruments. Drawing on the expert opinions from the supervisors, lecturers, head teachers, and peers, final instruments were prepared and used in the study.

3.8 Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Head teachers of the selected schools using an introduction letter. It was procured from the Head of Department Language Education, School of Education, Makerere University. The instruments were then pilot tested on one of the schools which was not part of the study and items in the instruments were adjusted accordingly. Using the introductory letter, the researcher visited the schools and requested the respondents to participate in the study. Teachers were asked if they wished to be tape recorded and students were asked if their exercise books could be used in the research. There after, data was collected in the following order. First observations followed by interviews, afterwards the students were interviewed and their exercise books were analyzed. Finally summaries under each variable were compiled. Data was analysed using constant comparative thematic analysis approach (Merriam, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994).
3.9 Data management

Data was analysed using constant comparative thematic analysis approach (Merriam, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994). This method involves a continual process of comparing pieces of data and identifying similarities and differences between them for generating patterns or categories from the data (Glasner and Strauss, 1967). Comparisons were made among teachers. In terms of how they taught writing, how they gave feedback and the answers they gave in the interviews. In reviewing the field notes, the researcher generated and tested assertions by looking for key linkages and conducting member checks. During data collection and analysis the researcher looked for key issues, recurrent events or activities that became points of focus; collected data that provided many incidents of the main issues in order to see the diversity of the dimensions under the issues or concerns; wrote about the issues being explored, tried to describe and account for all the incidents in the data while continuously searching for new incidents; worked with the data and emerging model to try and establish the influence among assessment, learning and teaching. Interviews and lessons were transcribed and texts were coded to enable constant comparison across cases. Finally a report of the findings was written.

3.10 Limitations

There are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. The sample was too small and therefore not representative of all the teachers who teach English language in the country. Some of the instruments used to gather data like the video and audio recordings could have affected teacher’s responses and behavior at some level. It is also difficult to study and conceptualise perception because it is an unconscious construct. The researcher also feels as if the learners’
responses were too positive. Maybe they did not wish to speak negatively about their teachers and may have ended up not expressing their real opinions.
Chapter Four

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, all the data collected through observation, interviews, document analysis is presented. Analysis is intended to aid in the understanding of classroom assessment of six teachers teaching writing to senior three secondary students. The data is presented based on the three research questions;

1. What are the language teachers’ current conceptions about assessment in general and about formative writing assessment in particular?

2. How do English language teachers implement questioning and feedback (assessment practices) in their classrooms?

3. How do English language teachers respond pedagogically to formative writing assessment data

Table 4.1 shows the demographic characteristics of the teachers who participated in the study by gender, teaching experience and highest academic qualification.

Table 4.1: Teachers Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Highest Academic Qualification</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Grade V(Diploma)</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Graduate (Bachelors Degree)</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Graduate (Bachelors Degreee)</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Graduate (Bachelors Degree)</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Graduate (Bachelors degree)</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher F</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Grade V ( Diploma)</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings reveal that four of the teachers 66% who participated in the study were female while the rest 2(33%) were male. The table also shows that all the participants had the required qualification to teach English language at ordinary level in Ugandan schools. Where by four of the teachers had degrees and two had diplomas. The findings also reveal that majority of the teachers had five and more years of teaching experience where only one teacher had four years of experience.

The fact that most of the teachers were female did not necessarily show a difference in their assessment practice. There was also no significant difference between the teachers who had taught for more than ten years and those who had five or four years of teaching experience. The researcher had made assumptions that the newly qualified teachers would exhibit new forms of assessment as opposed to the ones who had been in the field for along time. However they all seemed to use the old traditional method of assessment. That is teaching and then giving an assessment after the lesson. Another finding is that the term formative assessment seemed new to almost all the teachers. Most of them were more familiar with continuous assessment rather than formative assessment. In addition, qualification of the teachers did not yield any difference in assessment practice because all the teachers exhibited moments where they engaged in both formative and summative assessment in their classrooms.

The implication of this lack of difference in practice might be attributed to our training system which does not offer a lot of practice to the teachers before they go out in to the classrooms. Almost all teachers have to learn most of the teaching skills on the job. To make it worse, once on the job one might spend 20 years teaching without even a refresher course which means they might not be even aware of new literature to improve their practice. They therefore end up doing what their teachers did or just interpreting theory on their own.
4.1 Teachers perception of formative writing assessment

4.1.1 Concept of Formative Assessment. The data on teachers conceptions of formative assessment shows that teachers held different views on how to assess writing, how to give feedback and the how to use the data collected from assessment. This called for an in-depth analysis of each teacher’s behavior. The findings are based on what teachers said in interviews, what students said, what was observed in the classrooms and document analysis. All the teachers shared the opinion that assessment was important in the teaching and learning of students. Three of the interviewed teachers responded to the question “How is classroom assessment important to a) teacher b) learner in the following way:

The student will take studying seriously because he knows there is a checking point”. (teacher A)

It will help me know how far the students have perceived what I have been teaching, that will help me to repeat a particular topic or not, or to check even the speed for my learners”.(teacher B).

Well it is important because as a teacher you get to know you know am number one, how well the lesson has gone. Whether you have taught successfully or un成功fully”.(teacher C)”

The participants also gave the following reasons why they believed assessment was good for the students:

I think assessment helps a student or gives them a clear picture on whether they have understood the topics that have been taught. (teacher D).
It also serves as a vehicle to work harder to perform better incase things have gone wrong.” (teacher E)

A student who hasn’t understood will be able to know where they have gone wrong and do corrections.”(teacher F)

This implies that all teachers took assessment seriously and tried to apply it in their language classrooms. However, the above responses show a summative understanding of assessment as opposed to formative assessment. This is not to say that summative assessment has no place in the classroom but as research indicates, each assessment has a purpose. Data got from summative assessment cannot be used to change the learning outcomes because it comes when lesson has ended. Whereas if a child is stuck during the lesson, the data collected at that particular point in time can help a student understand what is going on before the lesson comes to an end. Thereby diverting the crisis of a teacher finding out at the end through a test or an exercise that majority did not understand the lesson and it might be too late at that time to do much about it. Re-teaching itself is not a bad strategy but without formative data, how different would the second lesson be from the first one?

Interviews further revealed that teachers thought assessment was important to them because it would help them group the learners together according to their abilities, help them when they are setting exams to know what to set, help them put emphasis on problematic areas, guide them on which topics to choose for teaching and it is a requirement form the ministry of education. Based on these responses one can conclude that teachers have an idea what assessment is all about. However, their interpretation of assessment leans towards summative rather than formative assessment. This in itself is not a bad thing however teachers ought to know both
assessments as they each serve different purposes in teaching and learning. Data also revealed that all the six teachers could not differentiate between summative and formative assessment. The following responses validate this statement;

“When you give an exercise, it will show you whether they have learnt or not” (teacher A)

“I make sure I give work at the end of the lesson, the way they do the exercise shows that they have understood or not” (teacher B)

“If you don’t assess, how will you know if they have followed or not?”(Teacher F)

The above responses show that assessment is perceived as a separate activity from teaching that comes after the lesson has been completed. This means that formative data that ought to be collected during the lesson to modify the lesson or to help both learners and teachers before the lesson comes to an end is not put to good use and all the teachers focus is on whether to go back and re-teach or not.

In addition, none of the six teachers could define assessment correctly. Below are some of the definitions the teachers gave when they were given an opportunity to define formative assessment;

“…the way through which a teacher finds out how students got what he has been teaching…”(teacher A)

“… a tool that helps a teacher to know how well a lesson has gone, whether you have taught successfully or unsuccessfully”(teacher B)

“… a yardstick that one uses that a teacher uses to gauge on how effective the learning and teaching progress is or has been.” (teacher C)
Clearly the above responses show a tendency towards summative rather than formative assessment. It is only the third definition that has in some aspect of formative assessment. One of the principles of formative assessment is that it is outcomes based. The question that teachers therefore ought to ask themselves is if they are achieving the objectives of the lesson not whether they have achieved the objectives. This means that data got from formative assessment can be used during the lesson to avoid a crisis at the end of the lesson or end of term or end of topic. The way a teacher perceives assessment is important because it determines whether that assessment will enhance or hamper learning.

There was some level of inconsistency noted in the teachers’ responses, for example the teacher who defined assessment as a yardstick that a teacher used to gauge how effective learning was or had been responded differently when asked other questions. Her response revealed that she, like her colleagues viewed classroom assessment as summative and her definition was just a textbook definition. When asked why she thought assessment was important to her she said “it helps a teacher to tell how the teaching process has been” a statement contrary to her previous statement “helps a teacher to gauge how the teaching process is or has been”. This means her perception of assessment is more summative than formative assessment.

All the teachers in this study made it clear that they deemed it important to monitor students writing and offer scaffolds during writing process. Among the strategies they said they used to monitor students progress were generic signs like looking at the facial expressions of learners, noting students participation in class by show of hands, response of learners during group work or group representations. Where as these strategies can give a general idea to a teacher on whether or not the lesson is being followed, they fail to account for an individual student who is at the centre of formative assessment. Research shows that in most cases, only a
small number of students participate in class discussions. This means that if a teacher followed only these strategies, a group of students who are shy would be left out. A teacher ought to have a bigger range of strategies which cater for the different leaning styles of students so that no one is left behind.

From the lessons observed, one could see clearly that individual learners were not given special attention. All the learners were subjected to the same pre-writing exercise, during-writing exercise and post-writing exercise. This behavior was confirmed in one of the lessons observed by the researcher. In this particular lesson, the teacher offered generic scaffolds to all the learners in her class. They were called upon to read a description of a building in a text book. She picked some learners to do the reading. After this, as a class, they all started contributing adjectives to describe their school. Answers were then written on the chalk board where everyone wrote the description in their books. After this, each and everyone was required to write a description of their home. This was indeed a good lesson but given the fact that learners in our classes are usually at different writing levels, one cannot rule out the fact that some individuals were probably left behind.

Arguably one would say that focusing on an individual in our large classrooms would be an impossible task for the teacher. However teachers can be challenged to think about strategies like group presentations, grouping students according to their different writing abilities and tailoring objectives that only suit a particular group. This would help eliminate the mentality of “one – shoe- fits- all” that dominates our classrooms.

In document analysis, the data showed that majority of the teachers did some form of assessment of learner’s writing. Apart from one teacher who did not mark at all. This was evidenced in some learners’ books, where errors were underlined, some had grades, symbols like
ticks ( ) could be seen. However what was missing was the detailed feedback that informs the learner where they went wrong and what they need to do to improve on their writing. However, giving detailed feedback to large numbers might prove a nightmare to some of the teachers because of the large numbers in our language classrooms. This is where formative theory suggests alternative means of assessment like peer assessment.

To get a deeper understanding of teachers’ conceptions on formative assessment, teachers were asked what they thought their role and students’ role was as far as assessment was concerned. Here are some of the responses when teachers were asked to explain their role and the role of their learners’ in assessment:

To mark and give comments to the learners (Teacher A)

Give exercises mark and give feedback to the learners (Teacher B)

To teach and mark, look at the weak areas of students, call them give them a feedback…(Teacher C)

And the students;

They may give you feedback which may help you (Teacher D)

Read teachers comments and correct their work (Teacher E)

Evaluate their work and correct their errors (Teacher F)

The above responses show that teachers still have a traditional view of what their role and what the learners’ roles are in as far as assessment is concerned. For one to really say they understand what formative assessment is, they need to know the role of assessment in learning and teaching, what their role is in as far as classroom assessment is concerned, plus the role of learners.
Research shows students should be fully involved in their own assessment and the assessment of their peers if learning is to be effective. The traditional role, whereby the teacher is the assessor and the learner the assessed should not take precedence all the time. For example in a writing class, learners who are able to judge a writer’s work will be able to write their own stories using the same criteria they used to judge another persons work. Also the traditional view of where the teacher expects learners to just do corrections without realizing that feedback comes to inform both teacher and leaner is also proved unhelpful in the teaching learning process.

Data from the lessons observed also confirmed this limited view of the teacher’s role and the learner’s role in the assessment. During lesson observation, teachers exhibited the following behavior that explained their role, all exercises came at the end of the lessons, in some classes those who were quick enough to finish were marked in class, while those who were not so fast collected books at the end of the lesson. Learners were not involved in their assessment and there was no conscious effort on the teacher’s part to collect or record data on their on teaching. At the beginning of all the lessons observed learners did not develop specific targets with their teachers which they were supposed to meet, in most of the lessons observed the teacher came in, wrote a topic on the blackboard, engaged in a long talk and gave an exercise. An incident where a learner self assessed or assessed their friends was not observed.

The above findings show that teachers still dominate all classroom planning and discourse. Learners are just passive participants ready to do what the teacher says. The implication is that most of the classrooms end up being dull and boring whereas if learners knew they were part of their own learning they would apply more effort. Teachers need to reflect on their own practice and devise means and strategies of involving learners more in their own learning. This might prove a challenge to teachers at first but if they were to get exposed to
classrooms where learner-centered approaches have been applied successfully am sure they would be willing to change practice. Most of the gaps in practice are as a result of knowledge gaps of the teachers themselves. Research has shown that teachers Content Knowledge (CK) and Pedagogical Content Knowledge have been associated with effective use of assessment for formative purposes.

A closer look at the documents did not yield a different picture. All the six teachers who participated in this study did not have lesson plans. Most of the lessons progressed basing on textbooks. In the schemes of work, a series of topics were listed. However, all these topics were based on the syllabus and textbooks. The schemes of work reflected no room for adjustments that would accrue out of formative assessment feedback. The only assessment included in the schemes of work was beginning of term, mid term and end of term assessment. In most of the exercise books seen, the quality of feedback given was not specific and therefore really unlikely to help learners improve on their writing. The comments were brief and short and ample time wasn’t given to act upon the feedback as no corrections were seen in students’ exercise books. One particular teacher did not do any marking at all.

These findings show that teachers do not involve learners in their planning and as a result they miss out on the potential that learners could bring to the teaching learning -environment. They also show the fact that teachers assume feedback is only meant to help the learners, that is why there is no formal way of accounting for feedback to the teachers from the learners. During the lessons, no teacher was observed consciously collecting data about their on teaching. As already said these gaps in practice could be due to different reasons but this study chose to attribute it to teachers’ lack of knowledge about formative practice. Teachers need to be
challenged to reflect on their role and the role in as far as assessment is concerned if they are to bring about change in the writing classroom.

Basing on the results, one can conclude that although teachers value classroom assessment, there is tendency towards using summative assessment in the classroom. This is evidenced through their comments and failure to use assessment results for formative purposes in their classrooms.

4.2 Formative Assessment Practices

4.2.1 Questioning. Interview data revealed that all teachers used questions in their classes; they were asked a number of questions about their questioning techniques. All Teachers explained that sometimes they used questioning before, during and after the lessons. They were of the view that asking a few questions before the lesson always helped the teacher to identify what students knew so as to build on it. Teachers also said during the lesson it was key to ask questions to see whether the students were following or not. Asking oral questions related to the topic helped to elicit ideas from the learners. For example two teachers elaborated on this view by saying;

The exercises we start with are mostly verbal, they are oral, situations based and invoke a lot of imagination, creativity, to spark them into thinking. (Teacher B)

I make sure they are ready to learn by asking them questions related to what we are going to write (Teacher C)

The above comments show that teachers understood the importance of questioning to learning. When asked where they got questions from, most of them said the textbooks had questions and
sometimes the questions come to them as lessons progressed. This again points to a weakness in
teacher practice. Relying solely on textbooks does not allow room for formative assessment
feedback as such, questions might not suit the learning needs of all the learners plus textbooks
are notorious for killing a teachers creativity, they are meant as a guideline not to be followed
100%. Teachers were also asked how they ensure that all the learners are participating in the
lesson, responses ranged from calling them by name especially those who did not want to put up
their hands. One teacher made this comment to stress her point;

Some learners are bright but they never put their hand up; you have to first
say, so and so what do you think…?” (teacher C)

Another said that if she threatened to include it in the grades at the end of the term, then
everyone would participate. But most of them said when learners are motivated and like the
lessons they tend to love participating. Teachers also gave different strategies on how they
handle wrong answers from the students, this ranged from rephrasing the question, asking
another student to help the one who has given a wrong answer and giving it to students as
homework to be addressed in the next lesson, no teacher mentioned that they give answers to the
students.. Teachers also said they used different techniques whenever a class became silent after
a question. One teacher made this comment;

Sometimes when you tell the whole class to write the answer in their
exercise books, you find when someone has written the correct answer and
probably they were just scared to give the answer..(teacher E)
Students were also given an opportunity to comment on their teacher’s questioning techniques. They were asked if they are asked questions during the lesson, if they get enough time to answer the questions, if they are given opportunities to ask questions. All the students’ responses concurred with what the teachers had said. They had no problems with the questions from their teachers. A possible explanation for this could be that the learners were not familiar with the researcher and might have given the answers that will not offend their teachers. Another possible reason is the fact that learners have had a passive role in their learning and possibly think everything a teacher does must be correct and good for their learning.

In order to verify the teachers’ claims on questioning practice, the researcher went to the classrooms to keenly look at the questioning and feedback strategies of the teachers. Basing on the literature available about formative assessment, the researcher in particular looked at the frequency of questioning, who was doing most of the questioning, the quality of the questions, wait time, scaffolding strategies employed by the teachers and lastly whether the questions within the lesson at least catered for almost all the forms of knowledge suggested by Bloom’s taxonomy

Table 4.2 shows the overall ratings on the key assessment indicators. The indicators ranged from 1 (not at all) to 4 (to a greater extent).
Table 4.2: The overall ratings on the key assessment indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Teacher A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. pre assessment: before teaching, teacher asks questions that expose</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students understanding and misunderstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher asks questions that cater for at least four or more levels of</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge as suggested by bloom’s taxonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher gives ample wait time at least 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seconds after asking a question to allow students to reflect before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to the next question.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher scaffolds question when response is not forthcoming</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Both teachers and students ask meaningful questions that allow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deeper learning to take place.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key
1-Not at all
2-some evidence
3-clear evidence
4-to a greater extent

Table 4.2 shows that most of the indicators were rated 1 and only indicators three and four had higher ratings. Looking at the fist indicator, data revealed that none of the teachers started with a pre-assessment. No questions were asked to prepare learners for the lesson and most of the lessons began with a reading activity similar to what they were going to write. All the stories were picked from textbooks. Students were told to write similar stories like what they had read. In other lessons observed the teacher introduced the aspect they were going to concentrate on in writing for example punctuation and started straight away by giving notes on definitions of
punctuation marks and examples of how to use them in writing. Learners were required to write notes.

This finding is alarming because it implies that teachers teach blindly. Pre-assessment is necessary for diagnostic purposes, just like a doctor checks patients before administering drugs. This assessment can as well be carried out before any lesson to tap in to students’ background knowledge that will help bridge the gap between background knowledge and new knowledge.

During lessons, teachers engaged in questioning. However, the questions fell in to two categories as stipulated by Blooms Taxonomy that is remembering and understanding levels and a little bit of application. Questions to do with analysis, evaluating and creativity were not asked at all in the lessons observed, yet all these types of questions have a role to play in the learning of the student. One or two levels should not be asked at the expense of others. This finding also reveals a gap in teachers’ knowledge on the type of questions they should ask that will engage learners thinking. Another possible explanation could be the anxiety of teachers to complete the syllabus in time, if certain aspects are not completed; your students are likely to fail national exams.

A look at the wait-time revealed a ray of hope. In some lessons the teachers allowed students to answer questions by increasing the wait time. For example in Teacher B’s lessons, students were given enough wait time after asking them questions. Most teachers would be scared of the awkward silence in the classroom but the teacher wasn’t and with time more and more students ended up participating because teacher gave them enough time to think and respond. In another lesson, she scaffolded questions when response was not forth coming to enable the students participate in the lesson. Unfortunately there was one particular teacher who answered questions for the learners, whenever learners would keep quiet, she would supply the
answer. when asked about this practice she defended herself by saying learners tend to misbehave when you give them a question and wait for a long time to answer, this was just a face saving measure for her lack of class control skills. Teachers ought to know that every single decision they make in class impacts on learning and this will encourage them to reflect on their practice.

During some lessons, there were teachers who engaged in formative practice, when responses were not forthcoming they rephrased questions or tried to give several hints and clues. However those moments were rare and most of the times teachers missed opportunities where they could have engaged in formative assessment and this would have resulted in deeper and meaningful learning.

The overall data shows teachers asked unplanned questions, asked low quality questions, did not ensure participation of everyone in the class and ended up dominating classroom discourse. Arguably one can say it’s impossible to ensure that every learner participates in a single lesson because of the time given for each lesson and the large numbers of students. However if a teacher is keen enough to draw a chart that shows the way students are responding, it will help the teacher to plan how to ensure that everyone is given an opportunity to get involved in their own learning.

Therefore the Initiate –Respond_ Evaluate (IRE) approach which dominated classroom discourse should be done away with as it does not promote effective learning. Teachers should be challenged to reflect on the questions they ask, plan for the questions that evoke learners in to thinking not reproducing or guessing what is in the teachers head.
4.2.2 Feedback. The interview data revealed that all teachers agreed on the usefulness of feedback to learners. One of the reasons they gave was that feedback makes learners accountable and helps them improve in their writing. They contended that learners needed to be marked in order to identify and correct their mistakes. They therefore said they make sure they give feedback to the learners. When asked “what sort of feedback do you give the students?” Three of the teachers gave the following answers:

- The most obvious is the written in their exercise books (Teacher D)
- I communicate with them straight away … at the end of the day I write a comment at the end of the paper (Teacher E)
- A mark followed by a remark (Teacher F)

The comments above verify that teachers give both oral and written feedback. In the interviews they were also asked the quality of the feedback, the criterion they used to provide feedback, who developed the criterion and finally how they made sure learners acted on the feedback given. Some of their responses were that they followed up individual students, revisited previous work and discussed with the students.

According to this study, it is not enough to give feedback. Feedback only becomes effective when it is used by the learner to close the knowledge gap. On the question of whether students used the feedback teachers said it depended on the students. Some students used the feedback however others after looking at the mark ignored the feedback. The implication of this finding is that teachers leave it upon the students to either use or discard the feedback. A teacher has the responsibility to give feedback that is useful to both the teacher and the learner. Otherwise why give it in the first place?
When asked which criteria they used in marking the learners, they all said they made a marking guide depending on the genre of the piece of writing the learners are supposed to make. None of them said they involved learners in the developing a criteria. Research also shows that learners benefit when they are part of coming up with the criteria especially when they get to judge other peoples work. This helps them to know what to include in their own compositions when it is their turn to write.

Below is a summary of the assessment practices as reported by the teachers;

- Give written exercises at the end of the lesson
- Baseline testing before each lesson
- Encourage peer assistance
- Follow up individuals
- Develop criteria for marking (marking guides)
- Mark and give both oral and written feedback

The above summary implies that teachers are satisfied with their practice, they believe they are doing what they are supposed to do in as far as writing assessment is concerned. Some of these statements were confirmed by the students when they were given an opportunity to comment on the feedback they receive; here are some of their responses

“She always underlines all the mistakes so that I don’t repeat them again”
(first student)

“If mistakes are many he says, ‘see me’ and I take my book and he explains that here you made a mistake, you should not use this word or….” (second student)
“When I get 7/10 then I know my composition is very good.” (third student)

Conclusively students seemed to be happy with the feedback they received. A possible explanation for this is the traditional view held about teachers that they are always right and what they do is always right.

To corroborate these statements, researcher also went to class to observe the giving of feedback by teachers.

Table 4.3: Shows the type of oral feedback that was expected from the teachers vis-à-vis the kind of feedback they actually gave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher acknowledges and appreciations students correct response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher elaborates on incomplete answers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Encourages self-correction and gives time for self – correction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Uses incorrect responses as discussion starters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Avoids depreciating remarks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Uses scaffolding strategies to handle incorrect answers such as, rephrasing, redirecting, probing, giving clues and cues.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key
1-Not at all
2-some evidence,
3-clear evidence
4-to a greater extent

In the above table evidence shows that no indicator was rated four because the evidence wasn’t sufficient and as already mentioned, the researcher only observed each teacher three times so obviously that is not enough time to make conclusive judgments .Indicator marked (d) all the
teachers scored low ratings because none of them discussed with the students on the incorrect responses. They either got someone else to give the correct response or in the case of Teacher A, just gave the right answer to the students. That being said, there were some moments when the teachers handled incorrect responses formatively. For example in one lesson observed the teacher allowed the student to self-correct, in another lesson, the teacher scaffolded the responses by rephrasing and during the lessons teachers also appreciated writers correct responses which encouraged the learners.

However, not all oral feedback was useful to the learners. In Teacher A’s lesson there we so many instances of choral answers that the teacher could not possibly know who was right and who was wrong so she ended up answering questions herself and students were forced to parrot her answer. Much as teachers used formative assessment in some moments in their lessons, there were incidents where they missed opportunities to respond in a way that would enhance the learning of the students. For example in Teacher C’s lesson, when students began to read their stories aloud, not all her comments were that good, for example she told one of the students who had written a story entitled “My wonderful home”:

There is nothing wonderful about this home

Most of the teachers at some point told their students “no” meaning that their responses were wrong without even explaining the reasons as to why the responses were wrong to the learners.

These findings show that there is a knowledge gap in the giving of oral feedback, this maybe attributed to our training. Most teacher training courses give general guidelines on how to give feedback, a lot of theory but not enough practice to teachers. In Uganda for example, student teachers are given two chances of school practice, supervisor comes once or twice to critique all the student teacher’s skill set. That does not adequately prepare teachers for the actual
practice so one ends up doing what they think is best by following what their teachers did or their own interpretation of what they have read in textbooks. Teachers ought to know that student teacher- interaction is a moment when learning takes place; it is up to the teacher to provide feedback that will enhance rather than hamper learning.

A look in to the documents also reflected the shallowness of teachers’ feedback. Using the research available about quality feedback; the following instrument was used to judge the teachers written feedback.

Table 4.4: Levels showing teachers written feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher indicates the problem for the learner for example underlines wrong punctuation, grammatical errors, spelling errors, misuse of words in the compositions but does not give them strategies on how to correct those errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher indicates the error and tries to correct the error for the learner in some places but sometimes also indicates the error and offers no comment on how to correct the error</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher points out the strengths and weaknesses and offers strategies form improvement which the student can understand for example. “Kate, you have used the descriptive words very well. I like that. However, you still need to work on the punctuation marks especially the: and the; these are different and shouldn’t be used interchangeably. Go back to your notes on page 62 of English in use and re-read the notes there.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to examine teachers’ written feedback, all the students’ exercise books were looked at. Evidence from the exercise books showed that all six teachers never went beyond level two. In particular, teacher F, did not mark exercise books at all, in order to analyse his marking style, the researcher had to look at the beginning of term scripts from the learners. Teacher B wrote comments like “correct your work” such a comment does not really help a learner because the question is, should the learner correct all the work? It does not specify where the learner went wrong and what should be done to make it right. In some books non-evaluative comments like “good work”, “a fair attempt” plus grades were seen. But this still does not explain to the learner what they did well so that they improve. In some books errors were underlined, like grammatical errors, spelling errors for example a child wrote the word “mavorous” teacher crossed it and wrote “marvelous” above it. Teacher B seemed to believe grades were very important and said “They love being graded. For them that’s their only way of responding to performance.” When she was asked what type of feedback she gave to the learners. Another principle of effective
feedback is that teachers should give their learner a chance to act upon the feedback. Much as Teacher B said she followed up the students to make sure they incorporated the feedback, I didn’t see evidence of that. Lessons progressed based on the scheme of work. Teacher A seemed to follow the same trend. Mistakes were pointed out like wrong punctuation and underlined errors. She also had non evaluative comments like “f. good attempt,” “fair”, some ticks somewhere but all these comments are not helpful to the learner because they don’t give a way forward. Some comments like “try to read your work and avoid careless mistakes” are also ambiguous. Research shows that feedback should be specific and understandable if it is to make a difference in the lives of the learner.

Teacher C’s marking seemed to be a little different from the other two. First of all her comments were more detailed in some books. However, she also did not go beyond level two because despite their length they did not point out strategies for improvement plus they were ambiguous in some areas. For example in one child’s book she wrote,

This is a lovely paragraph. Improve on the following idioms

usage, descriptive language, and grammatical sentences.

Then in another book, she crossed out the whole paragraph and wrote correct sentences above the students work. She also underlined almost all the errors in the students’ books. However, she was also inconsistent; in some books she would just put a big tick and a grade without a comment. Therefore her marking though thorough, is still not considered effective in as far as formative assessment is concerned.

Teacher E and D’s books were not so different from A and B’s books. Errors were underlined; some books had grades and brief comments. Again this means that teachers need further training in the giving of feedback if their marking is to be considered formative.
There is conflicting literature on written feedback. Some writers are of the view that feedback alone is not enough. Even if teachers gave students the best feedback it would not stop the learners from ignoring the feedback. Literature suggests that students should be involved in the criterion process. First of all they should be made aware of the objectives of the lesson and at the same time it should be clear to them what would constitute good writing. A writer cannot hit the target if they don’t know what the target is to begin with. So they advocate for a system where learners are involved from the beginning to the end.

To sum up, in the lessons observed, the following were evident;

- No embedded assessment methods
- Most of the classroom activities are got form textbooks
- Lessons tend to be teacher centred; to a greater extent
- Students did not ask questions.

The implication is that teachers are not giving effective feedback and this could be impacting negatively on the writing skills of the learners. As such it is important that teachers are given more guidance on how to give feedback and strategies they could use to ensure the use of this feedback by the learners.

Table 4.4 below shows what teachers said they did and what was actually observed in their classrooms.
Table 4.5: What teachers said they did and what was actually observed in their classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported Practice</th>
<th>Observed Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• pre assessment/baseline assessment</td>
<td>• did not engage learners’ prior knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• give both oral and written feedback to the students</td>
<td>• some books had no comments or grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure students act upon feedback</td>
<td>• no follow up questions or opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage peer assistance in assessment and learning.</td>
<td>• no group work or pair work observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use data in assessment to inform instruction</td>
<td>• no assessment methods embedded in scheme of work or lesson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above findings suggest that learners are not receiving the necessary feedback in their writing whereas teachers think they are giving the right feedback and as such writing skills are bound to be low. A possible explanation for the contradiction is the discrepancy, evidenced in the literature, between what teachers believe and what they actually do in the classroom. Arguably one can say this is because teachers have not been trained in giving detailed and formative feedback. However this knowledge gap should be addressed if we wish to see better writers.

4.3 Teachers response to formative writing data

4.3.1 Collection of data. All teachers were of the view that gathering data about their teaching was important to learning. However from the interviews four of them expressed the view that this data is collected informally through reading the students facial expressions and observing students participation in class. This is a generic way of gathering information about ones
teaching but unfortunately it is not enough because it does not pinpoint the particular problems an individual might be facing in writing. One student maybe having problems with punctuation another may be having problems with spellings therefore generally looking at the participation in class or looking at their faces might not be that helpful to help them improve. Out of the six teachers interviewed it is only two who said they formally gather information about their own teaching. Below is a summary of how they said they collected data about their own teaching

- administrators come to class and give them reports
- colleagues come to their classes and give them feedback
- check students exercise books and read facial expressions
- class councilors ask students and report to teachers
- analyse the students response in class and how they participate in projects.

All these methods indeed will give information to the teacher but they are too generic and still do not cater for individual needs in the writing class. Another challenge to these methods is that someone else is looking at the way you teach whereas the teacher herself needs to know whether her teaching is effective or not by conducting their own research and gaining first hand knowledge not secondary knowledge. Assessment for formative purposes is intended to assist with instruction when learning is still taking place. It is meant to provide data to inform decisions that are immediate This calls for teachers having a specific method of collecting data. Contingent learning is based on a steady supply of data in order to engage in the proper pedagogic action. Doing research about one's teaching is becoming an increasingly common practice that helps teachers to reflect on their own practice and improve on their own teaching therefore the ministry of education should ensure that teachers are informed about either during initial training or during teacher development seminars.
4.3.2 Use of data: Teachers were asked how they use the data they have collected to improve on the teaching and learning. Below is a summary of what they use the data for;

- re-teach a topic where necessary
- rephrase while still in class
- put students in groups so that strong can help the weak
- get a colleague to teach a certain aspect that you cannot teach

The above statements show that teachers engage in some pedagogic action. Rephrasing and grouping learners together are good strategies based on formative assessment and are bound to impact positively on learners writing skills. However, re-teaching is not consistent with the idea of contingent learning. This is because in formative assessment, the focus of learning is identifying what the learner knows and what sort of scaffold is needed in order to move the learner to the intended goal. If for example the learners did not understand how to apply semi colons in their compositions, unless the teacher identifies where the errors in thinking came from, re-teaching wouldn’t help much. In this case, re-teaching would make sense if the teacher used the information in the learners’ knowledge gaps in designing the second lesson.

The implication of this finding is that teachers do not only need training in how to systematically collect data on their own teaching but also different strategies on how to use the data to select the right pedagogic action.

When the researcher went to the classroom, the results were not much different. From the lessons observed, all the teachers did not carry out a baseline assessment. They started teaching without any idea on what students’ knew about a topic. As a result, most of the lessons were so dull and students failed to participate. Baseline assessment helps the teacher to know what students know and gives a teacher the direction the lesson should take thereby being more
meaningful for both the teacher and the learner. Although teachers asked questions during the lessons, a closer look at the questions showed that they were textbook questions. Teachers did not put much planning in the type of questions to ask, who would answer them or even the format of answering them. As a result, in some lessons there were a lot of chorus answers, which did not help a teacher know who was following and who wasn’t. In addition it was difficult for a teacher to identify learner difficulties without proper questioning techniques.

It was clear form the lessons that teachers had been marking the students books because they reminded learners about the persistent errors and as also evidenced in the exercise books. But in some lessons, the teachers feedback sounded as a by the way rather than something the teacher had discovered and planned for. For example one teacher in the middle of the lesson said to the students, “by the way some of you do not give names to your characters.” This is good advice but it sounded as if the teacher had just remembered it. Whereas if students errors were systematically gathered by the teacher to be addressed in the class in a certain way, it would probably be more beneficial than generic comments that just happen to pop in the teachers head during the lesson. The teacher would have ample time to analyse the students’ errors and probably map out strategies to handle them before another lesson there by being more helpful to the learners.

Teachers therefore need to be informed about the specific ways they can gather information about their own teaching and helped to get ways of using this information for the betterment of learning. A look at the documents also confirmed the researcher’s previous findings. The researcher was able to look at the schemes of work and students exercise books. Unfortunately lesson plans were not available. A look at the schemes of work showed that they did not embed assessment or even respond to the data in the schemes of work. In the students
exercise books the lessons progressed based on the scheme of work not the assessment. In our classes, we are always gathering data, when you ask a student a question, when you give an exercise at the end of the lesson, when you give homework. All assessment tools lead to the collecting of data. Formative assessment does not care about the tools used but the use of data. If you use the data to improve instruction then you are engaging in formative assessment but if you use the data to write reports to the parents then you are not engaging in formative assessment.

Teachers should know which information they need and from which students, how to collect that information and a clear plan of how they are going to use that information. Through the interview it was discovered that teacher do not collect data consciously. And as a result there was no systematic way of using the data to inform instruction.

Therefore from the results one van conclusively say that teachers do not use the data they collect formatively. Teachers need to be taught how to collect data about their own teaching and how to use this data to improve on the writing skills of the learners.

This chapter has presented and analysed the findings of the study that wished to understand teachers’ perceptions of formative writing assessment and how these perceptions impacted on their practice. Teacher practice was believed to have a direct connection to learner’s writing abilities. The next chapter presents the discussion of the findings conclusions and recommendations to improve the situation.
Chapter Five
Discussion of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction
This chapter discusses the results with regard to specific objectives; it starts with teachers’ perception of formative writing assessment, teachers’ practices of questioning and feedback in a writing classroom, and finally their pedagogical response to assessment data. This discussion was done by relating the findings with previous studies. Care was taken in elucidating the contradictions.

5.1 Discussion of results
5.1.1 Perception of Formative Assessment. An objective to establish whether teachers really understood formative writing assessment revealed that they do not. Results show that teachers do not differentiate between summative and formative assessment. Assessment is seen as a separate activity and always perceived as grading and certifying at the end of learning. This finding concurs with large scale studies by (Brown, 2004; Brown et al, 2009) who concluded that most teachers assessment conceptions are not in line with current assessment conceptions. Another study by Rueda and Garcia (1994) also came to the same conclusion. The researchers who studied fourth grade teachers in California concluded that the discrepancy between beliefs and new assessment policies hindered the implementation of assessment policies. For example the conception that assessment is separate from teaching is contrary to new assessment concept that would require a teacher to embed assessment in teaching.
Nakabugo (2003) who did a similar study in Ugandan primary teachers also came to the same conclusions as this study. Teachers have no deeper perception of formative assessment and as such they end up stuck in their traditional roles of assessment and classes end up dominated with teacher centred methods rather than learner centred methods. Although large scale studies like Black et al (2003) have come up with compelling research in favour of formative assessment, it still remains unpracticed in many of our classrooms today. Some of the reasons could be lack of teacher knowledge. Majority of the teachers lack an in-depth knowledge of the subjects they teach and this makes it difficult to engage learners in formative practice this teacher knowledge is what Shulman (1980) calls Content knowledge (CK). The writing skill is a very complex skill that has many sub-skills Kroll (1990) and therefore to teach effectively a teacher needs to know all these skills. This echoes some of the other studies which concluded that teachers are not adequately prepared to successfully implement a certain level of practice. For example Foster and Poppers (2009) did a 12-year research project in mathematics in the USA and came to a conclusion that teacher knowledge was lacking. During this research most of the teachers had not even heard of the term formative assessment. How would we expect them to implement something they didn’t even know anything about?

Another reason could be lack of reading materials and enough research about writing that may contribute to teacher perception. Teachers have nothing to challenge what they have been doing for the last many years. There are no new materials on the market that show what they have been doing can be done in a better way or if this material exists only a few teachers have access to this material as most Ugandan teachers rely on methods prescribed in the textbooks. This agrees with the findings of Nakabugo (2003) who carried out a study about continuous assessment of primary teachers in Uganda. She had this to say;
Most teachers in this research showed that they lacked comprehension of what constituted formative assessment, and those who demonstrated some understanding of the concept did not put this knowledge fully into practice because they lacked theoretical grounding.

It should also be noted that teachers lack professional development courses and projects. Most of the teachers get training and that is the end of it. Unless they are lucky enough to have money to go for further studies, they just keep operating on the knowledge they received during the teacher training and as such nothing changes in terms of practice. It may also be due to the poor training they received. This echoes conclusions made by Oplot–Okurut (2010) who studied the challenges met by statistics teachers in Uganda. The researcher called for teacher education programs to address the deficiency of teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge needs.

Boaler (1998), Wright, Horn and Sanders, (1997) are of the view that the most significant variable in student learning is the teacher. And this calls for a teacher to change their beliefs and understanding, but this cannot be achieved by mere wishes. Certain steps ought to be taken by both teachers and other stakeholders. For example studies by Torrance and Pryour (2002) and Guilkers et al (2013) advise teachers to build on their knowledge through research and theory. This is in line with Tato (1991) studies which advocate for teacher reflection. However teachers are warned not to just be consumers of other people’s knowledge but to be co-constructors of knowledge (Sweeny, 2003). Teachers need to align their beliefs to current theory about teaching and learning.

5.1.2 Formative Assessment Practices. An objective to establish whether teachers carried out formative writing assessment in their classrooms was pursued. This finding reveals the teachers
indeed do ask questions in their classes and also provide both oral and written feedback to the learners. However the questions asked are poorly formulated and do not engage student thinking. Teachers therefore end up dominating classroom discourse. The conclusion is that teachers questioning skills leave a lot to be desired. Evidence from this study concurred with what Madaus & Kellaghan, (1992) study uncovered. Teachers asked poorly focused questions that required short answers and responses that involved repetition other than reflection. They displayed limited understanding of formative assessment.

When it came to feedback, the feedback given was shallow and unlikely to scaffold writing. Feedback was not what one would consider quality feedback. It was untimely and consisted of grades and short evaluative comments that did not specify to the writers what they had done well and what they needed to do in order to improve on their writing. Another worrying finding was that much as teachers write comments like “do corrections” they do not follow up the corrections or even give the learners a chance to act upon the feedback so it ends up being such a waste of time for both the teacher and the learner. The feedback also indicated that improving or correcting the mistakes was the job of the learner and not both the teacher and learners thus leaving the burden of improving on the learners. This is not endorsed in formative assessment. These findings are contrary to the findings of Black et al, (2003) who found that teachers asked quality questions and allowed learners to participate in their own learning. But the reason for this was because before the research teaches were given research material about the importance of questions in class and as a result they changed their practice due to this exposure.

Rowe (1974) studied elementary science teachers were conducting questioning in USA. The study concluded that most teachers wait 0.9 seconds after asking students a question before answering it themselves. Such a short interval does not allow students to formulate answers.
When teachers were given an opportunity to increase the wait time, there was a marked difference in students learning:

- Students provided longer answers
- Failure to respond to teachers' questions decreased
- Students were more confident in their answers
- Some students even challenged other students' answers
- There was a variety of responses to the same questions

In this study, teachers did not give opportunities to learners to respond to questions and teacher discourse dominated classes.

Kluger and DeNis's (1996) review of over 3000 studies about the impact of feedback on students' learning highlighted some key points about feedback. Once received, an individual can respond in four different ways. One, an individual can change the behavior to reach the goal, change the goal, abandon the goal or simply reject the feedback. Weaver (2006) conducted group discussions with students at a UK university and found that students ignored feedback when it was: (1) too general or vague, (2) lacked guidance, (3) focused on the negative, or (4) was unrelated to the assessment criteria (2006, 387–8).

Higgins, Hartley, and Skelton (2002) discovered in a survey that only a small percentage of the respondents (33%) said they understood the criteria. The other percentage had no idea what was expected of them. These conclusions echo the conclusions of this study where feedback evolved around the following procedures. “Give exercise, collect books, mark them, put a grade and then return them with a few short comments for the students to do corrections”
Munoz Palacio and Escobar in their study of 62 teachers’ beliefs in Colombia came to the conclusion that sometimes teachers fail to implement good practices because of the pressure to hit deadlines. Most of the Ugandan classes are large and most schools value tests which are given frequently in order to pass national exams. Teachers may therefore end up concentrating on tests more than formative assessment. This echoes the findings of Nakabugo (2003) and Okolot–Opurut (2010) he had this to say;

The beginning-of-term, middle-of-term and end-of-term examinations are a replica of final UNEB examinations that congest instruction. Despite these examinations, teachers rarely provide feedback to students. One possible explanation for the hurry is that UNEB examinations policy pressures teachers to complete the syllabus… (Invited Paper Refereed)

Duers and Brown (2009) explain that teachers should start involving learners in their own assessment as this will reduce on the pressure that teachers feel and also promote interdependent learning and critical thinking skills in learners.

Another possible reason why formative writing assessment is weak in practice is because teacher lack good models to help them improve practice. Teachers need real practical models that can break down formative writing assessment and good materials to help them write. This concurs with a finding by Susuwele–Banda (2005) who did a study on teacher beliefs in Malawi. The study came to the conclusion that teachers need support from stake holders. Practice is shaped by beliefs and teachers have a tendency to do things the way they believe. Most teachers are comfortable with the way they have been teaching for the last many years and with the dependency syndrome that exists between teachers and learners. Some have not had a refresher
course in years and are likely to stick to the ancient methods of teaching. This reflects findings of Black et al (2003) Brown (2003) and Nakabugo (2003). Batten (1991 encourages teachers to change practice by reflecting on their teaching and being made aware of their own beliefs (Kahn (2000).

5.1.3 Pedagogical Response to Formative Writing Data. An objective to establish whether teachers collected data during teaching and how they responded to this data was pursued. Results show that teachers do not consciously collect data about their own teaching and as a result most of the data collected is not used to improve teaching and learning.

Heritage and Chang (2012) studied how teachers were assessing on line English language learners (ELL) at a university in California. In their study they concluded that teachers do not collect data on their own teaching because summative assessment has dominated classroom assessment for long. They explained that there are also cultural assumptions about how learning and teaching should be done and the combination of the two tends to deskill teachers and thy end up not assessing formatively. This echoes a study by Erickson (2007) who says teachers lack of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge limits teachers practice of formative assessment. Most of the teachers view the use of data in terms of summative assessment because they have views like re-teaching a topic, getting someone to re-teach a topic. This interpretation of data use is more summative than formative because re-teaching comes at the end of the lesson whereas formative assessment requires the teacher to use the data before the lesson comes to an end. This interpretation is not aligned to contingent learning that is promoted by formative assessment studies like Black and William (1998).
The large numbers also proved a challenge. Even if a teacher is to use questioning in class, there are only a few students at a time who can participate. It is difficult to ensure that each and every individual follows when you are teaching a class of 90 students. That means that some will be left behind unfortunately. This is contrary to what the formative practice is all about. In formative practice the individual is very important. A teacher ought to know how each learner is making progress in their classes.

The schools set up also posed a challenge. In all the six schools, the heads of department did the schemes of work for everyone, so unless the head of department knows about formative assessment and leaves room for it in the scheme of work, it is hard for a teacher to do as they want because they are accountable to the administrator who will ask why they never completed the scheme when others did. Again in all the six schools, writing was given one lesson a week. That makes it hard for the teacher to make the feedback as timely as possible. They have to wait a whole week before they get feedback and consolidate the feedback, which means that at this time students might forget the task at hand and therefore feedback may not be that helpful at that time.

Schulman (1986), Niemi and Heritage (2006) call for a focus on teachers’ content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. This echoes conclusions of Nakabugo’s (2003) study which states that teachers need to be helped on which areas to focus on in terms of practice Gilikers et al (2013) suggests involving teachers in their own research instead of prescribing for them what should be done they should be made part of projects that initiate change (collaborative research).
5.2 Conclusions

Three conclusions were drawn from the above discussions basing on the three research objectives in the study; they were as follows:

1. Teachers have failed to interpret government policy on formative assessment. As a result, formative assessment is weak in practice.
2. Teachers’ conceptions of classroom assessment lean towards summative rather than formative assessment. This has had a negative impact on learners writing abilities.
3. Teachers do not reflect on the quality of questions they ask their learners. This has resulted in teacher dominating classroom discourse and learners’ taking a back seat in as far as their leaning is concerned.
4. The feedback given to learners does not reflect effective feedback as it lacks details and direction for learners writing skills.
5. Teachers do not consciously collect data on their own teaching and this has hampered the use of this data in helping learners on how to become better writers.

5.3 Recommendations

This study was done at a very small scale. However, it still raises concerns that should be considered by teachers of language and other stakeholders. Much as there are many obstacles to the right kind of assessment in our Ugandan classroom; we cannot ignore assessing our learners. Black & William (1998) lay out a long list of the negative effects of bad assessment practices like grading. In brief, failure to assess has negative impact that we cannot afford especially in our writing classrooms. Failure to write is tantamount to failure in school because even all the other subject teachers expect writers to express their ideas through writing. All the national exams are
written and all students must write in order to respond to the other forms of assessment. In other words, one cannot do without this skill. Following the above finding sand conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers in training colleges should be trained on how to prepare quality questions for their class and how to give quality feedback to the learners. However, practicing teachers should not be forgotten, workshops and refresher courses could help teachers learn how to assess.

2. Partnering with other countries that are ahead in this practice could help. Even if our teachers do not travel abroad, video recording of these teachers’ lessons can be compiled and sent and teachers could benefit from those who are more experienced in formative practice.

3. The ministry of education and sports should help reduce on the numbers of students in each stream. Teaching writing is a challenge and teachers need all the help they can find therefore reduced number of students in class would be a big help to the teachers.

4. Some of this research has been done in other countries like United Kingdom and United States of America. There is need for a comparative study in an African setting where writers are subjected to formative assessment writing and others are not and we see for ourselves it really works.


Curricula, Examinations and Assessment in Sub-Saharan Secondary Education (CASASE); SEIA publication; Africa Region Human Development (AFTHD); World Bank, 2007. www.worldbank.org/afrip/seia.


Stiggins, R. J. (2002). Where is our assessment future and how can we get there from here? In R. W. Lissitz and W.D. Schafer (Eds.). *Assessment in educational reform: Both means and ends (112-125)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.


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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guide for teachers

1. How would you define classroom assessment
2. How would you define formative assessment
3. How is classroom assessment important to a) teacher b) learner
4. What are the roles of the following in classroom assessment a) teacher b) learner
5. How and why do you monitor students writing progress?
6. How do you identify students having difficulties during learning?
7. Aspects of questioning; a) when and why do you ask questions in your lessons?
   b) What is the source of these questions?
   c) How do you handle wrong responses to your questions?
   d) What do you do when you ask and no response is forthcoming?
8. Aspects of feedback (a) do you assess learners writing? Why?
   b) What criteria and who develops the criteria for marking?
   c) How do you ensure that learners act upon that feedback?
8. Do you have a method you use to collect information about your own teaching?
9. How do you use that information when you get it?
### Appendix B

**Instrument for analyzing teacher written feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Teacher indicates the problem for the learner for example underlines wrong punctuation, grammatical errors, spelling errors, misuse of words in the compositions but does not give them strategies on how to correct those errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Teacher indicates the error and tries to correct the error for the learner in some places but sometimes also indicates the error and offers no comment on how to correct the error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Teacher points out the strengths and weaknesses and offers strategies form improvement which the student can understand for example. “Kate, you have used the descriptive words very well. I like that. However, you still need to work on the punctuation marks especially the: and the; these are different and shouldn’t be used interchangeably. Go back to your notes on page 62 of English in use and re-read the notes there.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Teacher follows the same format in level three but gives an opportunity to the students to act upon the feedback (self adjust, review, revise, practice, improve, retry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback not at all reflective of quality feedback likely to enhance learning</td>
<td>Feedback extremely reflective of quality feedback likely to enhance learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Students’ Interview Guide

1. Does teacher ask you questions during the lesson?
2. Do you get enough time to answer the questions
3. During any writing activity does the teacher offer you guidance as you write?
4. Are you given an opportunity to ask questions
5. When the teacher returns your books after marking, what do you do?
6. Do you always understand how to correct your work?
7. Is there anything that you would wish the teacher to do while teaching or marking that they are not doing already?
Appendix D
Lesson observation protocol

Observation Date……………….                                    Time start…………………………
End…………………………
School…………………………………………………………………………………….
Teacher…………………………………………………………………………………..

PART ONE: THE LESSON

SECTION A: Basic Descriptive Information

1. Teacher Gender…………………………
2. Teaching experience…………………………
2. Students ……………males       ……………… females

3. Ability level of the students

4. A description of physical environment of the classroom

SECTION B. Purpose of the Lesson

1. According to the teacher, the purpose of the lesson was:
SECTION C: Implementation

| Teacher engages students prior knowledge (identifies conceptions and misconceptions) |  |
| teacher is able to “read” the students level of understanding and adjusts teaching accordingly |  |
| Teacher asks questions that cater for all forms of knowledge (blooms taxonomy) |  |
| Teacher gives enough time to students to respond to questions in class |  |
| Teacher scaffolds the question when response is not forthcoming |  |
| Teacher handles incorrect responses well |  |
| Teacher encourages students to ask questions |  |
| Teacher acknowledges students contributions |  |
| Teacher gives exercise/homework |  |
| Teacher gives guidance on how to perform well |  |
| Teacher assesses learners and gives feedback |  |

Is this reflective of best practice?
Appendix E

Sample scheme of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRAMMAR FOCUS</th>
<th>AIMS / OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>REFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Vocabulary</td>
<td>- learn to write</td>
<td>- reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words that show</td>
<td>- discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pieces</td>
<td>- dictation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 2. Vocabulary</td>
<td>- learners should</td>
<td>- writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be able to write</td>
<td>- composition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>homophones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contain sounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 2. Formal</td>
<td>- learners should</td>
<td>- writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>letters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>become familiar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with 'apology '</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>letters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 2. Spelling</td>
<td>- examine and</td>
<td>- discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>words often</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>misspelled</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and discuss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strategies of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helping them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improve spelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revision and end of term exams
Appendix F

Sample students work

Writing practice:
Describe the basic details that you undertook in preparation for your return to school.

**THE LAST DAYS OF THE HOLIDAY**

The long interesting term was cut short on the approaching of the reporting day to school. I had to wake up early in the morning to read for Beginning of Term Exams, which are literally the most important exams in the whole Term. I read my books like a mad man just to make my parents proud. The shopping was done by the shopping bag my mother because she wanted me to have enough time to read and rest. I think my mother because of her love, carrying the heavy books and lot of papers standing in a long queue to pay my school fees. So, it would be a big disappointment if I failed my tests so I read even harder. On the last day which I named down's day because you do not want to go back to school because you are thinking of the people you will miss, the food and other things. So I decided to do everything until I got tired. I ate pork like a pig, I watched television till I got tired. I walked around the house until my legs gave up. I played with my brother cause I wanted me leaving them. Time for packing this time went smoothly. Normally it is stressing you know; mother packing you this and you don't know where it is, and then she releases a river of quarrels but this time it was not bad we packed and finished quickly. On the reporting day I slept up to 7:00 so that I enjoy my bed and I wouldn't miss it. So, when I arrived at school, I was happy, but the only thing running in my mind was "Here goes the long boring term".
A man is enjoying his morning coffee when his wife comes in abruptly and slips him at the back of his head. Develop a dialogue on what happens next.

Man: (puzzled) Why have you done that? I see some of the coffee has spilled on my trouser.

Wife: (showing him a piece of paper and waving it before his face) I found this in your pocket and it has the name "Horse Mary" written on it. You had better have an explanation.

Man: (looking relieved. Even smiling.) Oh, that? Relax darling. That is the name of the horse I bet on at the races.

Wife: (still poking at him wildly) You take me for a fool, don't you?

Man: That is not fair, sweetheart. (Drawing closer to her.) You are the most precious thing in my life.

Wife: (moving away from him. "You may want to know your "horse" called you a few minutes ago."

Sample 1