

ABSTRACT

Functional writing is a pragmatic use of language for social and personal expression. It is a universal communication tool that determines achievement of students' lifelong goals. Teacher factors, resources, attitudes and methods determine students' achievement in functional writing skills. Among the functional skills namely; functional writing, cloze test and oral functional skills, functional writing skills recorded the lowest mean score in the Kenya certificate of secondary education (K.C.S.E) examination at 33.7% compared to 62.5% for cloze test and 45.6% for oral skills, for period 2008 to 2011 in West Pokot County. Performance of functional writing skills in the county is the lowest compared to Turkana with 42.2% and Samburu with 43.9%. The purpose of the study was to establish the effects of selected determinants of achievement in English functional writing skills among secondary school students in West Pokot County. The objectives of the study were to: establish the influence of teacher factors on students achievement in English functional writing skills, establish the influence of resources on students' achievement in English Functional writing skill, establish the influence of methods on students' achievement in English functional writing, and establish the influence of attitude of teachers on students' achievement in English functional writing skills. A conceptual framework was used showing the relationship between independent variables (teacher factors, resources, methods and attitude) and dependent variable (students' achievement in functional writing). The study used descriptive survey and correlation study designs. The study population consisted of 2580 Form 4 students who had been taught all functional skills, and 34 teachers of English subject from 34 schools. The study used saturated sampling technique to select 31 teachers while Krejcie and Morgan table was used to determine sample size of 334 students who were then randomly sampled. Data collection was done through teacher questionnaire, observation schedule, achievement test, focused group discussion and interview schedules. Pilot study comprised of 3 teachers of English and 250 students from 3 secondary schools. Cronbach's alpha formula was used to establish instruments reliability whereby reliability coefficient for Teacher questionnaire was 0.82. Supervisors from the Department of Educational Communication Technology, and Curriculum Studies of Maseno University ascertained content validity of instruments. Descriptive statistics (percentages and mean), were used to analyze quantitative data. A random effect model was used to show the magnitude of relationship between variables. Qualitative data from open-ended items was put in categorical themes as they emerged. The findings revealed that the relationship between teachers' performance and students' achievement was statistically significant (1.67, 95% CL: 1.31, 2.05; p-value<0.001) and that resources, methods and attitude had no significant influence on students' achievement in functional writing skills (p-values >0.05). The study concludes that teacher performance was the most significant factor. The study recommended that teacher training emphasize actual classroom performance. The findings may be significant to secondary school fraternity to realize better achievement in functional writing.