
Towards Accountability in Formative Assessment of Students' Writing: Teachers of English Practices in Selected Secondary Schools in Kenya

Ngumbao Rachel Mawia Kitungu¹, Peter L. Barasa² & Carolyn Omulando³

^{1&2}Department of Curriculum Instruction and Education Media, Moi University

Email: rachelngumbau@gmail.com; barasap@gmail.com

³Department of Education and Psychological Studies, KCA University

carolomulando@kcau.ac.ke

Abstract

Formative assessment is a powerful strategy for improving students' writing; however, the way such assessments are conducted can compromise their effectiveness. The Kenya National Examinations Council yearly feedback reports reveal perpetual learner underachievement in English writing skills in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). This points to challenges in learning of writing skills. Focused on this, the researcher sought to find the extent to which formative assessment of writing skills was conducted in a manner that promotes accountability for improving learning. This paper presents the partial findings of a much larger study that focused on teachers of English pedagogical practices in formative assessment of the writing skill. The study informed by Vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory, adopted a concurrent mixed methods approach embedded within the mixed research design. The study involved 22 Form Four teachers and their 198 Form Four learners in Nairobi County who were selected using purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling procedures. Data was collected using a teacher questionnaire, students' marked compositions and document analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS while qualitative data was analysed using content analysis procedures. The findings revealed that to a significant degree, learners were not assessed reliably enough to know their true ability and the shortcomings in their work that they needed to address. The findings also revealed underutilisation of evidence-based ways of evaluating students' writing. This raises issues of accountability in monitoring learners' progress and supporting their progress in learning. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to use reliable procedures for evaluating learners' writing and communicate the results in a form that enables use of feedback to inform subsequent learning.

Keywords: *Underachievement, Writing Skills, Formative Assessment, Accountability, Pedagogical Practices*

1.0 Introduction

The primary goal of classroom-based assessment of student writing is to make accurate inferences about student performance and progress to decide on how they should be helped and to plan subsequent instruction for further development. Therefore, to promote accountability for optimizing learning gains, the procedures used should be able to obtain the appropriate level of detail required to shape subsequent instruction (Zhang, 2018) and report assessment results in a form that is understandable to the learner, and which promotes further engagement for fixing the

specific errors in their writing (Andrade & Heritage, 2017). In this paper, procedures used for evaluating student writing refer to those processes undertaken to judge the quality of a given piece of writing including the choice and preparation of appropriate evaluation tools as well as the question of the agents (teachers, and students) and their role in the process.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. To this end the Government of Kenya (GoK) strives to provide high-quality and globally competitive education, envisioned in the country's Vision 2030. This is operationalized in the National Education Sector Strategic Plan (NESSP) for 2023-2027 which focuses on quality and strengthening of governance and accountability in the education sector. The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) yearly feedback reports for the past ten years (e.g. KNEC 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020 2019,) reveal perpetual learner underachievement in English writing skills in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). This points to challenges in the learning of writing skills. One tool with potential for helping students learn to write effectively is formative assessment which is an integral part of learning to write. For example, research clearly documents that formative assessment of learners' writing enhances teaching and learning and improves students' overall ability in writing (Jimenez, 2018; Graham *et al.*, 2016; Graham, Harris & Hebert, 2011). Jimenez, (2018) defines formative assessment as assessment conducted throughout the learning process to enhance learning. Such assessment, he observes, comprises eliciting evidence about learning to identify the gap between current and desired performance, providing feedback to students and involving them in the assessment and learning process to close the gap. Formative assessment is distinct from summative assessment which focuses on judging the extent to which a learner has achieved specified learning goals at the end of planned for instruction or course.

Assessments play multiple roles in education. Besides grading and certification for placement and selection, they are widely used in classrooms for measuring learner achievement and monitoring progress towards acquisition of desired learning outcomes. Policy makers view assessments linked with accountability as a powerful strategy for provision of quality education; hence, the use of national assessments and educational assessment systems for monitoring learner achievement to put in place intervention measures at critical levels of an education system. Accountability entails putting in place measures to ensure that assessments serve the purposes for which they are designed. This has implications on how the assessments are conducted as well as the reporting of assessment results. Focusing on accountability, the researcher assumed that Form Four teachers of English would be using valid and reliable procedures that inform learning in writing and promote engagement with feedback to optimise learning gains.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the procedures used by teachers of English in formative evaluation of students' writing skills to inform learning in writing.

The study objectives were:

1. To determine the tools used by teachers to evaluate students' writing.
2. To examine how teachers determined and reported the quality of students' writing.
3. To establish the extent to which teachers used evidence-based ways of evaluating learners' writing

Email of Corresponding Author:

rachelngumbau@gmail.com

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1.1 Statement of the problem

Writing is a fundamental skill in learning and in life beyond the classroom, yet many secondary school students in Kenya graduate with inadequate writing skills (KNEC KCSE feedback reports, 2013 to 2023). This has often had far reaching implications. For instance, a Daily Nation reporter (Patrick Lang'at, 2020) shocked many Kenyans when he expressed concern that some magistrates and judges were unable to write proper and well-reasoned judgments. Given the ramifications of such a shortcoming, this is a worrisome situation. It is also of concern that students who graduate out of school with a low proficiency in writing are at a serious disadvantage in meeting the demands of further education, securing a job and participating in social and civic activities (Graham et al. (2011). Research identifies formative assessment of students' writing as one of the strategies that hold promise for improving learners' writing skills (Graham, Harris & Hebert, 2011; Jimenez, 2018). This makes a study that would reveal gaps in teachers' practices that could be addressed to optimise learning gains in writing crucial.

1.2 Objective of the study

The study sought to explore the procedures used by teachers to evaluate the quality of learners writing to find out the extent to which formative assessment of English writing skills was conducted in a manner that promotes accountability for improving learning in writing.

1.3 Theoretical framework

This study was informed by the Social Cultural Theory (SCT) advanced by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). SCT posits that mediation is central to learning and that social interaction is the basis of learning. In addition, it postulates that learning occurs within a primary activity space, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which represents the gap between what an individual can do on their own and what they are able to do under appropriate social interactions. According to Vygotsky, a learner progresses through their ZPD by receiving assistance to overcome specific problems displayed in his or her work. The process of facilitating appropriate types of assistance is known as Scaffolding. Social interactions for scaffolding include not only the knowledgeable other but also equal peers and self-directed learning. Based on this, for mediation to be effective, procedures for evaluating the quality of students' written work should do so reliably and validly. If this does not happen, it becomes difficult to determine what scaffolds the learner exactly needs. In addition, if such procedures do not provide adequate detail on a student's performance, it becomes difficult for both the teacher and the learner to act on feedback for further development. Further, the principles of scaffolding (Belland, 2017; Gonulal & Loewen, 2018) which include among others the need to fade assistance depending on learners' needs, require that learners should be actively involved in their learning to fix identified weaknesses with appropriate assistance as required.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Teachers' choice of tools for evaluating students writing

For formative assessment to be effective, it is crucial to use appropriate diagnostic tools (Zhang, 2018). Assessments allow teachers to not only gather information about a learner's performance but also enable ongoing decisions about learners' capabilities, learning needs and progress towards

desired goals (Lopera-Oquendo et. Al. ,2024). Often there is great variability in grading learners writing (Asassafeh, 2021; Lopera-Oquendo et. Al., 2024); hence, if the right procedures are not used, assessment results can provide a distorted picture of learners' performance and impinge on scaffolding. Learners need to have information about the quality of their work, understand what constitutes good performance, and know what excellent work looks like to better understand where they are in relation to set goals, and what they should work on to advance their learning (Ragupathi & Lee, 2020; Andrade & Heritage, 2017). The tools commonly used in writing classrooms to evaluate student's writing include checklists, criteria sheets and rubrics (Lopera-Oquendo et. Al., 2024; Zhang 2018). They are useful for formative assessment because they state specific criteria, provide a systematic way of recording observations and enable both teachers and students to make objective judgements about the quality of a written piece of work (Brookhart, 2018). In addition, well prepared tools communicate expectations and serve as a feedback provision strategy because they provide a basis for dialoguing about aspects of student writing (Zhang, 2018). While teachers may use pre-prepared marking guides, the best evaluative tools for formative assessment are those that are based on the specific tasks that students undertake, their level of proficiency and the context in which learning takes place (Graham & Santangelo, 2015; Zhang, 2018).

2.2 Teachers' ways of determining and reporting on the quality of students' writing

The two most common ways of evaluating learners' writing are holistic and analytic scoring; holistic scoring produces a single integrated score which presents a general impression of the quality of a particular piece of writing, while analytic scoring evaluates different aspects of writing separately and aggregates the scores (Tomas et al. 2019; Lopera-Oquendo et. Al., 2024). According to Ragupathi and Lee (2020) an emphasis on formative assessment has fuelled a push towards the use of rubrics because: they give students a better understanding of what is being assessed, provide criteria on which their work will be judged, provide clear, accessible and understandable benchmarks for developing and judging their work and offer the necessary transparency in evaluation. Debate on which is more effective, holistic or analytic is inconclusive (Tomas et al. 2019); however, there is evidence that analytic rubrics are preferable for formative assessment (Hosseini & Mowlaie, 2016) as they allow for identification of the strengths and weaknesses in the various components of the writing skills being assessed and aid in feedback provision (Brookhart, 2018, Asassafeh ,2021). Asassafeh (2021) argues that analytic reporting provides details on the areas that need improvement and is an important component of formative assessment since the outcomes can be used to focus efforts for improvement.

Grading and scoring are terms that are often used to refer to evaluation of student writing. They involve giving a letter grade such as an "A" or a mark such as 16 out of 20. While this practice is useful for certain purposes such as summative assessments, it is inadequate for formative assessment because grades and marks alone neither pinpoint shortcomings in a learner's writing nor guide the learner on what he or she should do to improve (Andrade & Heritage, 2017; Schinske & Tanner, 2014). In view of this, commenting on learners' writing is considered crucial as it provides learners with informational feedback that motivates and assists them in addressing identified shortcomings (Derham, Balloo & Winstone; 2021, Graham *et al.*, 2016).

2.3 The extent to which teachers of English used evidence-based ways of evaluating students' writing

The evidence-based ways of evaluating students' writing that were considered for investigation in this study included: using appropriate diagnostic tools- which is covered under teachers' choice of tools for evaluating students writing, developing clear descriptions of performance at different levels of proficiency, using samples to demonstrate performance at different levels of proficiency, involving learners in preparation of marking guides, sharing marking tools with learners before the start of the assigned task and training learners to use evaluative tools to identify weaknesses and strengths in their own writing.

Developing clear descriptions of performance at different levels of proficiency is a crucial process in evaluating the quality of learners writing (Andrade & Heritage 2017; Brookhart, 2018); Firstly, it provides clear benchmarks for judging the quality of learners writing which enhances reliability and objectivity in scoring; secondly, it spells out expectations at different levels of performance which allows goal setting and monitoring progress towards achieving the desired goal; Thirdly, detailed descriptors provide a clear sense of expectations which can help learners figure out what they need to work on to advance their learning. Using samples of essays to demonstrate performance at different levels is a useful way of helping learners to conceptualize and internalize the qualities of performance at each level of the continuum. Also, the psychometric qualities of rubrics are noted to improve when rubrics and exemplars are used together (Lopera-Oquendo et. Al., 2024).

The practice of sharing marking guides with learners before the start of assigned tasks is recommended by many scholars (e.g. Andrade & Heritage 2017; Graham *et al.*, 2016) who consider it to be beneficial in various ways. Some of the benefits of this practice include placing learners at the centre of their learning and helping them to stay focused on meeting the spelt-out expectations. Sharing rubrics with students can also have the benefits of enhancing learning since they allow learners to understand the characteristics of good writing. This practice is also in line with SCT's condition of intersubjectivity in scaffolding; an understanding of what successful performance of the target task looks like is deemed necessary for learners to know when the task is accomplished successfully (Belland, 2017; Gonulal & Loewen, 2018) to enable them progress to other tasks that propel them to realise their potential.

Student involvement in preparation and use of evaluative criteria has been identified as an effective way of helping students to improve their writing (Andrade & Heritage 2017). When students take part in identifying the aspects to be evaluated in different types of writing and in coming up with descriptors for different levels of performance, they internalize qualities of good writing in the different types of writing that they undertake.

The need to train learners on the use of evaluative tools has been expressed by many writing scholars (Liu & Edwards; 2018; Mak & Wong, 2019). When learners are trained adequately, they can self-assess, which allows them to reflect on their capabilities and consciously plan subsequent action for improvement. Moreover, training learners can enable them to peer or self- assess their work effectively. This can reduce the load of the teacher and create more opportunities for students to write and provide immediate feedback to each other.

3.0 Materials and methods

The study which was guided by Vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory adopted a concurrent mixed methods approach embedded within the mixed research design. Purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling procedures were used to select the study sample. The Participants were 22 Form Four teachers and their 198 Form Four learners in Nairobi County. Nairobi County which is one of the 47 counties of Kenya was purposively selected because it had a mix of both performing and non-performing schools which had students of varied levels of ability representative of those found in secondary schools in Kenya. Eleven schools representing 10% of the 110 public schools that sat KCSE in 2021 were selected and then stratified into National, Extra- County, County, and Sub-County schools in accordance with the way schools are categorized in Kenya. From each of the selected schools, two teachers were randomly selected from the teachers teaching English in Form Four. A total of 22 teachers were selected for the study. For every teacher, nine of their learners were sampled using stratified random sampling based on learners' ability in the English subject; consequently, a total of 18 learners per school were sampled for the study.

Data was collected using a questionnaire and document analysis of students marked compositions. The questionnaire was piloted using a convenient sample of a performing and a non-performing secondary school to ensure that the pilot study population was the same as that of the main study. Reliability analysis of the rating scales that were used to measure the robustness of the questionnaire returned a Cronbach alpha value of 0.9594, which means the data from the questionnaire was reliable and had internal consistency. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire was analysed using SPSS and presented using descriptive statistics comprising frequencies and percentages, while data from learners marked compositions was analysed using content analysis.

Ethical issues were observed as required. Before carrying out research in the selected schools, the researcher obtained a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSIT). Permission was also sought from the principals of the schools involved in the study. Further, the participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, its procedures and benefits and on their right to withdraw from the research if need be. Thus informed, the participants signed a form to indicate informed consent. Anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy were maintained by ensuring that the identities of the research participants were not revealed.

4.0 Results and discussion

The purpose of the study was to find out the extent to which formative assessment of learners' writing was conducted in a manner that promotes accountability for improving learning. Specifically, the researcher sought to explore the procedures for evaluating the quality of students writing to establish whether learners were assessed reliably both to have a true picture of their actual ability in relation to set goals and to better understand the specific shortcomings in their writing as a starting point for addressing their challenges. The results and discussions of the study are presented in subsequent sections below.

4.1 Teachers' choice of tools for evaluating students' writing

In line with this, teachers were asked to indicate to what extent they used the KNEC KCSE Paper 3 Composition Marking Guide, other pre-prepared marking guides from the internet or elsewhere, or their own marking guides. The findings are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' choice of tools for rating the quality of students' writing

Evaluation tools		Never	Some Extent	Large Extent	Very Large Extent	Total
KNEC KCSE Paper 3 marking Guide	Freq.		6	9	7	22
	Percent		27.27	40.91	31.82	100
Pre-prepared marking guides	Freq.	2	6	9	5	22
	Percent	9.09	27.27	40.91	22.73	100
Own prepared marking guide	Freq.		6	6	10	22
	Percent		27.27	27.27	45.45	100

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The findings show that teachers used the three types of tools to a comparable degree. The KNEC KCSE Paper 3 marking guide was widely used for evaluating students writing with 72.73% of the teachers indicating that they used it either to a large extent (40.91%) or to a very large extent (31.82%). Similarly, pre-prepared marking guides were used to a comparable degree with 73.64% of the teachers reporting that they used them to a large (40.91) or very large extent (22.73). Teachers also prepared own marking guides with 72, 72% of them indicating that they used such guides to a large or very large extent. Only two of the teachers indicated that they never used pre-prepared guides. An analysis of learners' marked essays indicated prevalent use of symbols and coding system proposed in the KNEC marking guide, suggesting that it was the one that was mostly used to score the essays that were selected for analysis.

Notably, the findings revealed a prevalence for use of generic tools; teachers used pre-prepared marking guides to a great extent. Zhang (2018) asserts that such generic tools are inadequate for formative assessment because they do not fulfil a diagnostic purpose. Literature (Andrade & Heritage 2017, Zhang, 2018), emphasises that the best tools for classroom assessment are those that feature the specific elements that the teacher wants to see in their learners' writing at the particular point in time, and are in language that is understandable to the learner since they are intended to spell expectations and serve as feedback provision tools. According to Brookhart (2018), task-specific tools specify the specific elements that students' responses should display, are linked to the intended learning outcome(s) to be assessed and relate to the types of decisions that need to be made. Generic tools may miss out on these elements since they are created for other purposes that may not reflect specific classroom contexts and learning needs. For instance, the KCSE Paper 3 marking guide which most teachers used extensively is summative and impressionistic in nature and may not have featured adequate details for provision of feedback on

Email of Corresponding Author:

rachelngumbau@gmail.com

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the areas of focus in the written task that learners undertook in the current study. Moreover, the guide is written in a language that targets the examiner and which may not be clear to the learner; for instance phrases like ‘jerky flow’ (found in the guide and which featured as teachers comments in some of the essays that were analysed) may not have made sense to a considerable number of learners who participated in the study. The results therefore reveal a shortcoming in teachers’ practices; hence, while teachers may use existing rubrics, creating and using their own marking schemes would be more beneficial for gauging level of performance based on their learners needs, monitoring progress in priority areas of focus and for provision of specific feedback (Santangelo & Graham, 2015; Zhang, 2018).

4.2 Teachers’ ways of determining and reporting on the quality of students’ writing

The focus in this case was on how the teachers reported on the quality of learners’ writing as well as how they arrived at their decisions. The results are presented below.

Table 2: Teachers of English ways of reporting on the quality of students’ writing

How teachers Report on student’ writing	Freq.	Percent %
Comments only (no grade or mark)	1	4.55
An overall mark and comments	21	95.45
An overall grade and comments	0	0
Total	22	100

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From the table, it is observable that most of the teachers (95.45%) reported that they gave an overall comment and a mark. Only one teacher reported using comments only. These results are in contrast with findings from document analysis of learners’ marked scripts which revealed that some teachers (18.18 %) gave only an overall mark without any comments. In addition, among the teachers who gave marks and comments there existed inconsistencies in that some commented only on some of the compositions and failed to comment on others when there was need to do so. Consequently, a considerable number of learners did not receive informational feedback. Regarding how teachers arrived at a score or grade, majority of the teachers (68.18%) indicated that they rated specific aspects separately and then added the marks to obtain the overall score, while 31. 82% reported that they usually gave an overall holistic mark by considering all criteria at once. In contrast, all the students’ scripts that were analysed were scored holistically- an overall mark was given at the end of each of the compositions and there was no breakdown on learners’ performance on the various aspects of writing.

A matter of concern is that some learners received feedback comprising scores alone. Schinske and Tanner (2014) observe that learners may not understand exactly what a mark or grade means. The same argument is supported by Andrade and Heritage (2017) who assert that grades alone do not constitute formative feedback. Therefore, failing to give learners informational feedback is a gap

Email of Corresponding Author:

rachelngumbau@gmail.com

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in reporting performance. This has implications for further development of learners writing skills; when learners do not obtain adequate information about their strengths as well as their weaknesses in their writing, they are at a loss on what they need to do and may fail to take action to overcome the shortcomings in their writing. A key principle of feedback is that it should usefully inform the learner of ways to improve their performance (Winstone & Carless, 2020). Moreover, Scaffolding is about giving appropriate assistance just when it is required (Belland, 2017).

Regarding how teachers typically arrived at a score or grade, the findings based on the teachers' questionnaire revealed that majority of the teachers (68.18%) used analytic rating while 31.82% used holistic marking by considering all criteria at once. In contrast, all the students' scripts that were analysed were scored holistically - an overall mark was given at the end of each of the compositions and there was no breakdown on learners' performance on the various aspects of writing. Holistic reporting was a shortcoming in teachers' formative assessment practices because it only serves to identify a student's overall writing proficiency without providing more specific feedback (Asassafeh, 2021) which is essential for formative assessment. Further, this type of reporting does not promote engagement with feedback since it does not provide adequate detail on the specific areas that a learner needs to address.

4.3 The extent to which teachers of English used evidence-based ways of evaluating students' writing

Table 3 presents the summary on the findings on the extent to which teachers used evidence-based ways of evaluating students' writing that were considered for investigation in the study.

Table 3: Teachers' use of evidence-based ways of evaluating students writing

		Not at all	Some Extent	Large Extent	Very Large Extent
Developing clear descriptions of performance at different levels	Freq.	2	7	10	3
	Percent	9.09	31.82	45.45	13.64
Using samples to demonstrate performance at different levels	Freq.	1	5	12	4
	Percent	4.55	22.73	54.55	18.18
Involving students in preparing marking guides	Freq.	15	4	1	2
	Percent	68.18	18.18	4.55	9.09
Sharing marking guides with students before assignment	Freq.	6	10	2	4
	Percent	27.27	45.45	9.09	18.18
Training students using marking guides to identify strengths and weaknesses	Freq.	5	7	7	3
	Percent	22.73	31.82	31.82	13.64

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Regarding developing of clear descriptions of performance for assigned tasks, the results indicate that a considerable number of teachers (41.91%) reported not doing it at all or doing it to some extent but more than half of them (59.09%) indicated doing it to a large or very large extent. Majority of teachers (73.06%) indicated that they used samples to demonstrate performance at different levels to a large or very large extent but 27.28% reported doing so only to some extent or

Email of Corresponding Author:

rachelngumbau@gmail.com

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not at all. Apparently, majority of the teachers (68.18 %) reported that they did not involve learners at all in preparing marking guides. Likewise, sharing marking guides with learners, and training them on using marking guides to identify strengths and weaknesses in their writing were not common practices; 27.27 % of the teachers reported that they did not share marking guides with their learners at all while 45.45% indicated that they did it only to some extent. Similarly, more than half of the teachers (54%) reported that they did not train learners on using marking guides to identify strengths and weaknesses in their writing or did it only to some extent.

The considerable number of teachers indicating that they did not establish descriptions of performance at different levels of proficiency before assigned tasks suggests a gap in determining standards of performance as this can promote subjectivity and impinge on goal setting. According to Van der Kleij (2022), a critical first step for the design of an assessment is identification of desired standards and clarification of what performance at different levels looks like. Andrade & Heritage (2017) argue that setting clear goals is an essential part of determining how well learners have achieved expectations. The findings also reveal that learner involvement was underutilised. Large percentages of teachers reported that they involved learners to a small extent or not at all in preparing marking guides (86.36%), sharing marking guides with students before assignment (73.72%), and training students in using marking guides (54.55%).

It is a matter of concern that the practices of involving learners in preparation of marking guides and sharing marking guides with them before commencement of assigned tasks were not common. These practices are part of current global trends in formative assessment that are viewed to enhance learning gains variously (Andrade & Heritage, 2017; Graham *et al.*, 2016); Sharing marking guides with learners presents a learner-centred approach in which expectations are spelled out; thereby, informing them what it means to complete a task successfully. It also provides them with clear and understandable standards for determining the shortcomings in their work. Involving learners in preparation of marking guides and using samples of written pieces to demonstrate performance at different levels helps them internalize qualities of good writing in the different types of writing that they undertake. Consequently, underutilising these practices may have denied learners opportunities for enhancing their learning. Similarly, the practice of training learners on using marking guides was also underutilized. This means that majority of learners missed out on the benefits of the practice (Liu and Edwards; 2018; Mak and Wong, 2019) which among others include building their capacity to self and peer assess to enhance their learning.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The finding of this study reveal that the procedures used for evaluating and reporting on the quality of learners' writing displayed some deficiencies that could hinder learners' development of writing skills. Firstly, there was preference for use of generic evaluative tools which do not adequately serve a diagnostic purpose as per the demands of formative assessment. Secondly, reporting on learners writing in most cases did not provide the learner and the teacher with adequate detail to plan subsequent learning and remediation. Thirdly, when it came to evidence-based ways of assessing learners' writing, learner centred strategies such as involving learners in preparing marking guides, sharing marking guides with learners and training learners in using marking guides to self or peer-assess were underutilized. Considering these findings, the results

indicated that in some cases learners were not assessed reliably enough to know their actual ability in relation to set goals and that they did not receive adequate information about the shortcomings in their writing to maximize remediation. This raises issues of accountability in promoting development of learners' writing skills. In view of this, the study recommends that while teachers may use existing rubrics, it is crucial for them to prepare and use task specific evaluative tools that best diagnose their students' learning needs and allow for provision of feedback in priority areas of focus in accordance with their learners' proficiency levels. In addition, assessment feedback should include adequate details on students' strengths and weaknesses to promote further engagement and urgency on the areas that need improvement. This means that teachers should endeavour to provide every learner with well thought-out informational comments that enable progress towards attainment of desired learning goals. Further, it is crucial for teachers to align their procedures with evidence-based ways of evaluating students' writing; thence, increase opportunities for further development.

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Email of Corresponding Author:

rachelngumbau@gmail.com
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About the Authors

Rachel Mawia Kitungu is a doctoral student at Moi university. She holds an MA in English and Linguistics and B.Ed. English and Literature both from Kenyatta university. Her area of specialization is English Language Education. Research interests include language learning materials and educational assessments.

Peter Barasa is a professor of Language education in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media at Moi University. He is published in the areas of Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Research, Language Education, Applied Linguistics, Internationalization of Higher Education, and Performing Arts. He is a DAAD alumnus, an ORS (UK) award recipient, a Wingate Scholar and a Salzburg Fellow (Shakespeare and the Globe).

Carolyn Omulando is a professor of Education in Educational, Media, and Technology, KCA University. She has served in various leadership capacities while in university teaching service, among them the most notable are the founding Dean School of Education and Social Sciences at Alupe University and Director Open Distance Education, KCA University.

Conflict of interest

The authors hereby declare no conflict of interest with regard to the publication of this paper.

Email of Corresponding Author:

rachelngumbau@gmail.com
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