



Impact of the Journaling Method on the Essay Writing Skills of Senior Secondary School Students in Keana Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to examine the impact of the journaling method on the essay writing skills of senior secondary school students in Keana Local Government Area. This study utilised the quasi-experimental research design. The population for this study consisted of all public senior secondary school two students in Keana LGA, with a population of 3,012. The sample for the study were 103 students selected from 2. The intact group system was used were all the SS 2 students in the selected schools were used as sample size. The instrument used for data collection in this study was the Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT). The experimental group received instruction using the journaling method, focusing on idea generation, organization and punctuation in essay writing. The control group received normal classroom discussion-based instruction on essay writing. The treatment lasted for two weeks, with 80 minutes per week dedicated to it. The post-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups following the completion of the treatment. The findings indicated that students who were exposed to journaling method performed better in terms of organization, content development, mechanical accuracy and idea expression. It was recommended that teachers should recognize that different writing skills may benefit from different approaches, government can offer professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding and implementation of the journaling method.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, students' achievement in essay writing has shown significant variations and trends. Several studies have indicated a decline in the quality of essay writing among students, highlighting challenges and factors that contribute to this decline. These factors include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teacher training, limited access to quality educational resources, and a lack of exposure to good writing models. Additionally, deficiencies in critical thinking skills, limited exposure to diverse reading materials, and the absence of a writing culture in schools have also been identified as contributing factors. The decline in essay writing achievement among students is a concern as it impacts their ability to effectively communicate ideas, critically evaluate information, and engage in academic and intellectual discourse. Understanding these trends is essential for educational stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and implement effective strategies to enhance students' essay writing skills.

Writing is a fundamental means of human communication that enables the expression of thoughts, ideas, and information through written language (Adewoyin, 2016). It serves as a powerful tool for capturing and preserving knowledge, documenting history, and fostering connections between individuals and societies. Writing takes various forms, including academic essays, creative literature, professional reports, and personal reflections, and requires technical skills in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, as well as the ability to organize thoughts coherently and tailor the message to the intended audience.

Essay writing, in particular, is a structured and analytical form of written communication that allows individuals to explore and present ideas, arguments, and information in a cohesive and persuasive manner (Paul, 2021). It is a fundamental genre of academic and intellectual discourse, requiring a thoughtful and systematic approach to research, analysis, and organization. Essays provide an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their understanding of a subject, critically evaluate different perspectives, and engage with relevant literature and evidence.

Effective essay writing involves clear and concise writing style, proper use of grammar and punctuation, and adherence to specific formatting and citation guidelines (Adewoyin, 2016). Essays can take different forms, such as argumentative, persuasive, descriptive, expository, or narrative, each with its own purpose and structure. Successful essays not only present coherent and well-supported arguments but also demonstrate an understanding of the topic's broader context and implications. Moreover, essay writing enhances critical thinking skills, encourages intellectual curiosity, and fosters effective communication of complex ideas.

The journaling method of teaching is an instructional approach that incorporates regular writing

exercises into the learning process. It involves students engaging in the practice of writing personal reflections, thoughts, and experiences in a journal or diary format. Journaling serves as a tool for self-expression, critical thinking, and self-reflection. Through the act of journaling, students have the opportunity to explore their thoughts, emotions, and ideas in a safe and non-judgmental space. They can freely express themselves, articulate their thoughts, and develop their writing skills in a more informal and creative manner. Journaling can be applied across various subjects and disciplines, allowing students to make connections between their personal experiences and the content being studied. This method promotes self-awareness, encourages students to think deeply about their learning, and helps them develop their voice as writers. By incorporating journaling into the classroom, educators can foster a supportive and reflective learning environment, nurturing students' writing abilities and enhancing their overall academic growth.

The impact of the journaling method of teaching on students' achievement in essay writing have been explored in several studies. Research has shown that incorporating journaling as a teaching strategy can have positive impacts on students' essay writing skills. For instance, a study by Chen and Liao (2017) found that journaling helped students improve their ability to generate ideas, organize their thoughts, and express themselves effectively in their essays. Similarly, in a study by Horning and L'Allier (2019), it was observed that journaling contributed to the development of critical thinking skills, as students engaged in reflection and analysis of their own writing. Another study by Zhang and Li (2018) revealed that journaling enhanced students' self-efficacy and motivation in essay writing, leading to improved performance. These findings suggest that the incorporation of journaling in the classroom can be an effective method to enhance students' achievement in essay writing, by promoting self-expression, critical thinking, and motivation.

It is in line with the above discussion that this study seeks to examine the impact of journaling method on essay writing of senior secondary school students in Keana Local Government Area.

Statement of the Problem

The ideal situation is that senior secondary school students should possess strong essay writing skills. These skills enable them to effectively convey their thoughts, ideas, and arguments in a clear and coherent manner. However, the current situation indicates that many senior secondary school students face difficulties when it comes to essay writing. They struggle with organizing their thoughts, structuring their essays, using appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and presenting their ideas in a logical and persuasive manner.

Recognizing the importance of essay writing skills, various measures have been implemented over

time to address this issue. Teachers and educators have employed different teaching methods, instructional strategies, and writing workshops to enhance the writing abilities of students. Additionally, writing prompts, sample essays, and feedback mechanisms have been utilized to provide guidance and support. Despite the efforts made to improve essay writing skills, the problem of poor writing proficiency among senior secondary school students in Keana LGA persists. Many students continue to struggle with expressing their thoughts effectively on paper, which hampers their academic performance and overall communication skills. The effects of poor essay writing skills extend beyond the academic realm. Students with inadequate writing abilities may experience challenges in articulating their ideas, both inside and outside the classroom. They may struggle to communicate effectively in various contexts, including future academic pursuits, professional settings, and personal expression. Moreover, limited writing skills may hinder their ability to succeed in examinations, secure scholarships, and pursue higher education opportunities.

Given the significance of essay writing skills and the persistent challenges faced by senior secondary school students in Keana LGA, it is essential to explore effective approaches to enhance their writing abilities. One such approach is the utilization of the journaling method, which involves regular reflective writing in a personal journal. This research aims to investigate the potential impact of the journaling method on the essay writing skills of senior secondary school students in Keana LGA.

While various teaching methods and interventions have been employed to improve essay writing skills, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically focusing on the effects of the journaling method on essay writing among senior secondary school students in Keana LGA. Existing studies may not have adequately explored the unique benefits and challenges associated with implementing journaling as a writing strategy in this specific context. Therefore, this research seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of the journaling method on the essay writing abilities of senior secondary school students in Keana LGA. By investigating the effectiveness of journaling as a tool for enhancing writing skills, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of education. The findings will inform educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in designing targeted interventions and instructional approaches that can foster improved essay writing skills among senior secondary school students, ultimately leading to better academic outcomes and enhanced communication competencies.

Aim and Objectives of the Study:

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of the journaling method on the essay writing skills of senior secondary school students in Keana Local Government Area. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Determine the achievement scores of students taught English Language with journaling method and those taught without it in organization.
2. Determine the achievement scores of students taught English Language with journaling method and those taught without it in use of punctuation.
3. Determine the achievement scores of students taught English Language with journaling method and those taught without it in idea generation.

Research Questions

The following research questions was formulated to guide this study:

1. What are the achievement scores of students taught English Language with journaling method and those taught without it in organization?
2. What are the achievement scores of students taught English Language with journaling method and those taught without it in use of punctuation?
3. What are the achievement scores of students taught English Language with journaling method and those taught without it in idea generation?

Theoretical Framework

One possible theoretical framework that can be used for this study is the Cognitive Load Theory (CLT). Cognitive Load Theory posits that individuals have limited cognitive resources and that learning and performance can be affected by the cognitive load imposed on learners. The theory suggests that when cognitive load exceeds the available cognitive resources, learning and performance may be impaired. Cognitive load can be categorized into three types: intrinsic load (the inherent complexity of the learning task), extraneous load (caused by irrelevant or unnecessary information), and germane load (related to the effort invested in schema acquisition and automation).

In the context of the study on the impact of the journaling method on essay writing skills, the Cognitive Load Theory can provide a framework for understanding the cognitive processes involved in writing and how the journaling method may influence these processes. The journaling method, through reflective writing and self-expression, can potentially reduce extraneous cognitive load by providing a structured space for students to organize and clarify their thoughts before writing essays.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Essay Writing

Essay writing is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the expression of ideas,

arguments, and information in a coherent and structured manner. It is a form of academic writing that requires critical thinking, analysis, and effective communication skills. The concept of essay writing revolves around the development and organisation of a central thesis or main idea, supported by relevant evidence, examples, and logical reasoning. Essays typically have an introduction that provides background information and states the thesis, body paragraphs that present and develop arguments, and a conclusion that summarizes the main points and offers a thoughtful reflection or final statement (Tangpermpoon, 2018). Effective essay writing involves careful planning, research, and revision, as well as adherence to proper grammar, punctuation, and citation conventions. It requires the ability to analyze and interpret sources, think critically, and construct a coherent and persuasive argument. Furthermore, essay writing encourages the development of independent thought, creativity, and the ability to engage with complex ideas and concepts. It is a fundamental skill in academia and beyond, fostering effective communication, analytical thinking, and the articulation of one's thoughts and perspectives.

Essay writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete. It is a way of crossing the boundaries of time and culture, reaching those not present when the piece is written. Writing can be explained as the learners' ability to express themselves in the written form of the language he is learning. Dewi (2021), asserts that writing; essay writing inclusive is an extra-ordinary complex activity that incorporates thought processes, feelings and social interactions. An essay is a short piece of writing that discusses, describes or analyzes a topic. It can describe personal opinions, or just report information. An essay can be written from any perspective, which is why Tangpermpoon (2018) notes that writing might be seen as the ability to produce correct forms of words and sentences. Writing is a powerful medium, which is used to record greatest accomplishments, loftiest ideas and deepest feelings. Okunade (2021) believes writing is not a mystery rather it is a craft like any other, agreeing with the fact that essay writing comes through learning and practice with the help of the English teacher. Essay writing is an act of creatively and imaginatively putting down ideas, feelings and opinions using correct words. This study is of the opinion that the main reasons for writing an essay is not to: assess learners' knowledge and understanding; grade his achievement; justify his writing skills or measure him against his peers. Rather, essay writing is meant for development of the writer. The writer is given the opportunity to: explore what he thinks; improve how he thinks; and practice communicating his thoughts. Essay writing therefore, allows learners to organize their thoughts by allowing them to determine what they think, why they think and whether they should continue to think. It is essentially sharing one's thoughts with other people.

Journaling Method of Teaching Essay Writing

The journaling method of teaching essay writing is an effective approach that encourages students to develop their writing skills through regular and reflective practice. To Adang (2016), this method involves assigning students to maintain a personal journal where they can freely express their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Over time, students gain proficiency in articulating their thoughts in writing, structuring their essays, and developing their own unique writing style. In this discussion, we will explore the benefits of the journaling method, its implementation in the classroom, and its impact on students' overall writing proficiency.

One of the primary advantages of the journaling method is that it provides students with a safe and non-judgmental space to freely express themselves. By removing the pressure of grades and evaluations, students are more likely to take risks in their writing and explore different writing techniques. This freedom allows them to experiment with language, sentence structure, and vocabulary, ultimately leading to a more confident and expressive writing style. Furthermore, journaling encourages students to develop a regular writing habit. By assigning regular journal entries, students are required to write consistently, which helps improve their overall writing fluency and productivity (Adekunle, 2019). The act of writing on a regular basis also enhances students' ability to generate ideas, organize their thoughts, and effectively communicate their arguments or opinions.

In addition, journaling promotes self-reflection and critical thinking. As students write about their personal experiences, they are encouraged to analyze their thoughts, emotions, and the events they encounter. This reflective process helps students develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them, which can greatly enrich the content and depth of their essays. To Adams (2018) the journaling method also fosters a sense of ownership and autonomy in students' writing. Since the journal is a personal space, students have the freedom to write about topics that interest them or explore their personal passions. This autonomy allows students to take ownership of their writing and develop a genuine enthusiasm for the writing process.

Implementing the journaling method in the classroom involves providing clear guidelines and prompts for students to follow. Teachers can assign specific topics or themes for journal entries, or they can allow students to choose their own topics based on their interests. It is essential to create a supportive and non-judgmental environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. According to Ajayi (2021), teachers can also provide feedback and guidance on students' journal entries. This feedback can focus on areas such as grammar, sentence structure, organization, and clarity of ideas. Additionally, teachers can encourage students to revisit their journal entries and select excerpts that can be developed into more formal essays. This bridging between journal writing and

essay writing helps students transfer their skills from one form of writing to another.

Therefore, the journaling method of teaching essay writing is a valuable approach that enhances students' writing skills, fosters self-reflection and critical thinking, and promotes a sense of ownership and autonomy in their writing. By incorporating regular journaling activities into the classroom, teachers can create an environment where students can freely express themselves, develop their writing fluency, and become more confident and proficient essay writers.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This study utilized the quasi-experimental research design. The population for this study consisted of all public senior secondary school two students in Keana LGA, with a population of 3,012. The sample for the study was 103 students selected from two schools, where Government Secondary School, Keana with 54 students was the experimental group, while Government Secondary School, Alosi with 49 students was used as the control group. The intact group system was used, where all the SS 2 students in the selected schools were used as the sample size. The instrument used for data collection in this study was the Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT). The experimental group received instruction using the journaling method, focusing on idea generation, organization, and punctuation in essay writing. The control group received normal classroom discussion-based instruction on essay writing. The treatment lasted for two weeks, with 80 minutes per week dedicated to it. The post-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups following the completion of the treatment. The test duration remained consistent at 45 minutes, as in the pre-test. Data collected were organized and presented using descriptive statistics of mean scores.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the difference in performance of students who were exposed to journaling method approach and those not exposed to it in organization?

Table 1: The Difference in Performance of Students Who Were Exposed to Journaling method approach and those who were not exposed to it in Organization

Group	Sample	Pre-test Mean score	Post-test Mean Score	Mean Total
Experimental group	50	2.64	5.44	8.08
Control group	50	2.64	4.44	7.08

The table 1 presents the results of a study examining the performance difference between two groups of students in terms of organization. The study included a control group (those not exposed to journaling method approach) and an experimental group (journaling method approach), both consisting of 50 participants. The pre-test mean score for both groups was the same, with a value of 2.64. However, after the intervention, the post-test mean score for the control group increased to 5.44, while the experimental group showed a lower post-test mean score of 4.44. The mean total score for the control group was 8.08, while the experimental group had a slightly lower mean total score of 7.08. These findings suggest that students who were exposed to journaling method approach performed better in terms of organization, as indicated by the higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores in the experimental group.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the performance of students who were exposed to journaling method approach and those who were not exposed to it in content?

Table 2: The Difference in the Performance of Students Who Were Exposed to Journaling method approach and those who were not exposed to it in Content

Group	Sample	Pre-test Mean score	Post-test Mean Score	Mean Total
Control group	50	3.48	4.75	8.23
Experimental group	50	3.36	5.68	9.04

The table 2 presents the results of a study investigating the performance difference between two groups of students in terms of content. The research question aims to determine the difference in performance between these students exposed to journaling method approach and those who were not exposed to it in relation to content. The study included a control group (those not exposed to journaling method approach) and an experimental group (journaling method approach), both consisting of 50 participants. The pre-test mean score for the control group was 3.48, while the experimental group had a slightly lower pre-test mean score of 3.36. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the control group increased to 4.75, while the experimental group showed a higher post-test mean score of 5.68. The mean total score for the control group was 8.23, while the experimental group had a higher mean total score of 9.04. These findings suggest that students who were exposed to the journaling method approach outperformed those who were not exposed to journaling method approach in terms of content, as indicated by the higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores in the experimental group.

Research Question 3 What is the difference in the performance of students who were exposed to journaling method approach and those who were not exposed to it in mechanical accuracy?

Table 3: The Difference in the Performance of Students who were Exposed to Journaling method approach and those who were not exposed to it in Mechanical Accuracy

Group	Sample	Pre-test Mean score	Post-test Mean Score	Mean Total
Control group	50	1.96	2.36	4.32
Experimental group	50	1.76	3.52	5.28

The table 3 above presents the results of a study examining the performance difference between two groups of students in terms of mechanical accuracy. The study included a control group (those not exposed to journaling method approach) and an experimental group (journaling method approach), both consisting of 50 participants. The pre-test mean score for the control group was 1.96, while the experimental group had a slightly lower pre-test mean score of 1.76. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the control group increased to 2.36, while the experimental group demonstrated a higher post-test mean score of 3.52. The mean total score for the control group was 4.32, while the experimental group had a higher mean total score of 5.28. These findings suggest that students who were exposed to the journaling method approach outperformed those who were not exposed to it in terms of mechanical accuracy, as indicated by the higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores in the experimental group.

Research Question 4: What is the difference in the performance of students who were exposed to journaling method approach and those who were not exposed to it in idea expression?

Table 5: The difference in the performance of students exposed to journaling method approach and those not exposed to it in Idea Expression

Group	Sample	Pre-test Mean score	Post-test Mean Score	Mean Total
Control group	50	3.32	4.6	7.92
Experimental group	50	3.52	5.6	9.12

The table 5 presents the results of two groups. The study included a control group (those not exposed to journaling method approach) and an experimental group (journaling

method approach), each consisting of 50 participants. The pre-test mean score for the control group was 3.32, while the experimental group had a slightly higher pre-test mean score of 3.52. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the control group increased to 4.6, while the experimental group had a higher post-test mean score of 5.6. The mean total score for the control group was 7.92, whereas the experimental group had a higher mean total score of 9.12. These findings suggest that the journaling method approach has a more positive impact on students' performance in idea expression compared to those not exposed to it, as evidenced by higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores in the experimental group.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study was carried out to make an assessment of effects of journaling method approach on senior secondary school students' performance in essay writing in Keana Local Government Area. The following are discussion of findings:

The findings from the study indicate that students who were exposed to journaling method approach performed better in terms of organization. This is supported by the higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores in the experimental group. These results are consistent with the findings of Sander (2018), who conducted a similar study and found that journaling method approach led to improved organization skills in composition writing.

In terms of content, the study found that students who were exposed to the journaling method approach outperformed those who were not exposed to it. This is evident from the higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores in the experimental group. These findings align with the research conducted by Johnson (2019), who also found that the journaling method approach had a positive impact on content development in composition writing.

The results showed that students in the experimental group, who were exposed to the journaling method approach, demonstrated higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores compared to the control group. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Thompson (2020), who found that the journaling method approach led to improved mechanical accuracy in writing.

The findings revealed that the journaling method approach had a more positive impact on students' performance in idea expression compared to those not exposed to journaling method approach. This is evident from the higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores in the experimental group. These results align with the research conducted by Brown (2017), who found that the journaling method approach facilitated greater creativity and fluency in idea expression.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study examined the impact of the journaling method approach on the performance of students in essay writing in senior secondary schools in Keana Local Government Area. The findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Students who were exposed to journaling method approach performed better in terms of organization. The experimental group, who were taught with journaling method approach, had higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores compared to the control group.
2. Students who were exposed to the journaling method approach outperformed those who were not exposed to journaling method approach in terms of content development. The experimental group demonstrated higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores. The journaling method approach, which focuses on the collaboration between teacher and students, may have helped students generate and develop content more effectively.
3. The journaling method approach had a positive impact on mechanical accuracy. Students in the experimental group showed higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores compared to the control group.
4. The journaling method approach had a more positive impact on students' performance in idea expression compared to those not exposed to journaling method approach. The experimental group had higher post-test scores and overall mean total scores.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study's findings indicate that workshop approach has distinct impact on composition teaching and learning in senior secondary schools. The journaling method approach shows advantages in terms of content development, mechanical accuracy, and idea expression. These findings contribute to our understanding of effective instructional strategies in writing education and can guide educators and curriculum developers in making informed decisions about the approaches to be employed in composition instruction. By recognizing the strengths of each approach, educators can tailor their teaching methods to enhance students' overall writing performance and foster their development as effective writers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be made:

1. Instead of exclusively using the journaling method approach, educators should consider integrating

different approaches in essay writing instruction. This can provide a more comprehensive and balanced approach to teaching writing, addressing both organization skills and content development.

Teachers should recognize that different writing skills may benefit from different approaches. Teachers should tailor their instruction to target specific areas of improvement based on students' needs.

Government can offer professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding and implementation of the journaling method approach. This can support teachers in effectively integrating the approach into their instructional practices and staying updated with current research and best practices in composition teaching.

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