

CHAPTER ONE.

Introduction.

The aim of this research was to look at the teaching of writing in a form four class. The focus was on the teacher and her teaching techniques when teaching writing. The main concern of the research is on the writing of 'Free or Continuous Essays'. This particular type of essay has been chosen because in recent years, the Ministry of Education has decided to incorporate the 1119 English Paper into the existing English 1322 Paper. In Paper 2 of the English Language 1119/1322 Paper, the most marks have been allocated to the section on 'free essay'. For the sake of the students, therefore, I feel that, teachers should place greater emphasis on the teaching of writing and try to help students develop the necessary writing skills required in continuous prose.

There are various methods that can be used in teaching writing in class. However, this study used only one method which was the 'Process Writing' Approach. Two different lessons on two topics were conducted in class. The lessons were:

- 1) In the first lesson, the teacher only discussed the steps involved in 'process writing' without actually showing the students how to go about them. The students were left on their own to follow the various steps mentioned in class.
- 2) The next lesson, the teacher explained step involved in the writing process in detail. In addition, the teacher also spent some time to show them examples and did each step together with the class as a whole.

From these two lessons, the products will be looked at to see if there any differences in the number of books collected from the students and the quality of their work.

Some theoretical background and philosophical underpinnings on the teaching of writing will also be looked at such as the work by Zamel, Barbara Kroll, Krashen, J. Gage, Fulkerson, Vygotsky and many more. The last part of the paper will be looking at some of the limitations of the study as well as the implications and suggestions for the classroom teaching.

Rationale:

There has been a change in the examination format of the form five English Language paper recently. In the past, students were required to answer two compositions in the English Language Paper II. However, with the introduction of the English 1119/1322 Paper, students are now required to answer one guided composition and one 'free composition'. In addition, in Paper II, 40% is allocated for the 'free essay', which represents the biggest weightage of the overall mark of the paper. (Summary – 30%, Guided Essay – 30%, Free Essay – 40%). From the instructions given in the paper also, the students are advised to spend one hour on this question (free essay). This clearly shows that there is a move in emphasis towards 'free/continuous essay' and to give students the opportunity to be able to show their command of the language. Therefore, in order to help the students prepare for the examinations, it is felt that English Language teachers should also make some changes in their teaching and should start giving more attention to the teaching of the writing skills. Also, many

teachers still believe in the notion that ‘structures’ are more important in the English class. Hence, many teachers place great emphasis on the teaching of grammar and try to avoid writing essays in class. They feel that essay writing takes up a lot of the time and the marking is tedious. Some even avoid teaching students on the techniques of writing or the ‘how’. Rather, many emphasize on the ‘why’ they need to write and concentrate more on giving instructions to them.

My rationale for choosing this area then is due to my own belief that language teachers often neglect ‘essay writing’ in class because they themselves are not sure of how to go about teaching it. However, with the new examination format, which emphasizes on language creativity, I feel that it is time that we allow our students to write in class and teach them the skills involved in writing. Many would argue that it would be a waste of time teaching students the skills because in the examinations (reality), students do not have the time to practise all these skills. As teachers, it is important that we realize our purpose or teaching, that is, not only to prepare students for the examinations, but also to educate them and prepare them for their future.

I also feel that many of us, as English teachers have the tendency to give students essay topics with some expectations of what we should get in the ‘products’. We often set our minds on the topics and expect the students to ‘be able to read our minds’, thus fulfilling these expectations. We then, come-up with the concept of essays which are ‘out of topic’ as we feel that these essays do not meet our expectations. After doing some research, I realized that ‘free essays’ are mainly to see students’ command of the language and teachers need to be open-minded to be able to

accept whatever is given in the 'products'. Hence, this is another reason why I chose 'free essays' for this paper.

From all these then, I decided to do an 'action-research' study on the teaching of writing, specifically 'free essays', as I believe that the method adopted in class is very important and I also believe that teachers should at least expose students to the skills involved in "Process Writing".