Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Integrated Instructional Approaches for Teaching English Writing Skills in Public Junior Schools in Uasin Gishu County.

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ABSTRACT

Writing is a key language skill, yet learners in Kenya continue to experience difficulties in English writing, and a competency-based curriculum alone does not guarantee effective classroom practice. Integrated instructional approaches that combine process-based, genre-based and product-oriented teaching offer a promising response, but implementing them places considerable demands on teachers. This study examined the challenges faced by teachers in implementing integrated instructional approaches for teaching English writing skills in public junior schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Multi-stage sampling was used to select 45 public junior schools, from which 289 Grade 7 learners and 45 teachers of English were sampled. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, group discussions and a document analysis checklist. In total, 285 questionnaires were returned, including 35 from teachers, giving an overall return rate of 85.3%. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 29, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings showed that teachers experienced multiple, interconnected challenges. Differences in learners' English proficiency were the most prominent (M = 4.23), followed by limited teacher preparedness (M = 4.06), large class sizes (M = 4.00), gaps in professional training (M = 3.97), low learner engagement and motivation (M = 3.91) and limited teaching and learning resources (M = 3.86). Interviews and group discussions corroborated these results, particularly the difficulty of giving individual feedback in large classes. The study concludes that implementation is constrained by contextual and pedagogical factors. It recommends adequate provision of writing resources, reduced class sizes, continuous practice-based professional development and differentiated instruction for learners with varying proficiency.

Key words: Integrated instructional approaches; English writing skills; Implementation challenges; Teacher preparedness; Junior school

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental language skill through which learners communicate ideas, organise information, express opinions and demonstrate knowledge across academic and social contexts (Bora, 2023). Effective writing requires the coordination of several linguistic and cognitive processes, including generating and organising ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, applying grammatical rules, constructing coherent texts, and observing conventions such as spelling and punctuation. Unlike oral communication, written communication requires learners to make these choices explicit and sustain meaning across a text (Fitria, 2024). Consequently, the development of writing competence requires instructional practices that provide learners with opportunities to understand how texts are constructed, practise different forms of writing, receive feedback, and revise their work.

This is particularly important in second-language learning contexts, where learners must develop both the linguistic resources and the communicative strategies needed to express meaning effectively in the target language (Altun, 2023).

Globally, the teaching of English writing has increasingly shifted from an exclusive emphasis on the final written product towards approaches that recognise writing as a developmental, purposeful and socially situated activity (Zhou, 2023). Concerns about learners' writing proficiency have increased as education systems place greater emphasis on communication, literacy and the ability to use language effectively across academic and professional contexts (Lekamge & Rajavarathan, 2024).

Despite these curricular expectations, evidence from Kenya continues to point to weaknesses in learners' English language performance, including difficulties associated with grammar, organisation, fluency and effective communication of ideas. National assessment and curriculum implementation reports have continued to draw attention to variations in learners' achievement and to challenges experienced in translating competency-based principles into classroom practice (Kenya National Examinations Council [KNEC], 2023; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2024). The persistence of these difficulties suggests that the presence of a competency-oriented curriculum alone does not guarantee effective development of writing skills (Kibbumba, Okello, & Isa, 2026). The manner in which teachers interpret and implement instructional approaches is therefore an important consideration in understanding learners' writing outcomes.

Integrated instructional approaches respond to this concern by combining the strengths of process-based, genre-based and product-oriented teaching. Process-based instruction guides learners through planning, drafting, revising and editing; genre-based instruction introduces them to the purposes and structures of different text types; and product-oriented instruction builds accuracy through models and guided practice (Al Bloushi & Al Shuraiaan, 2024; Maluleke, 2024; Musdalifah, 2025). Used together, these approaches offer teachers a fuller repertoire for addressing the linguistic, organisational and cognitive demands of writing.

However, integrating these approaches places considerable demands on teachers, who must decide when and how to combine strategies, provide feedback on learners' drafts and adapt tasks to learners with different levels of English proficiency. Studies in Kenya and other African contexts report that large classes, scarce instructional materials and limited teacher preparedness constrain the implementation of competence-based and communicative approaches (Atuhura & Nambi, 2024; Cheruiyot & Ongeti, 2023; Tedeneke, 2022).

With the introduction of junior school under the Competency-Based Education (CBE), understanding how teachers manage these demands has become increasingly urgent. Yet much of the available evidence on writing instruction focuses on single approaches or on secondary and tertiary settings (Ajmal, Ahmad & Anwer, 2022; Wasike, Ongeti & Syomwene, 2022), while local studies on junior schools have addressed areas such as teacher preparedness in Kiswahili (Wamokhela, 2025) and innovative assessment in English (Matere, 2026). The challenges teachers face in integrating writing approaches in Grade 7 English classrooms therefore remain largely unexplored.

This study therefore sought to establish the challenges faced by teachers in implementing integrated instructional approaches for teaching English writing skills in public junior schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. By examining challenges relating to teaching and learning resources, class size, teacher preparedness, professional training, learner engagement and differences in learners' English proficiency, the study provides evidence to guide the Ministry of Education, school leaders and teachers in strengthening writing instruction under the CBE.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine the challenges teachers experience in implementing integrated instructional approaches for teaching English writing among Grade 7 learners. It was conducted in public junior schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, where junior secondary education is offered under the Competency-Based Education. The initial target population comprised 25,898 respondents, namely 25,000 Grade 7 learners and 898 teachers of English, drawn from 449 public junior schools across the six sub-counties

of Uasin Gishu County. Trans Nzoia County was used for the pilot study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used: 45 schools (10%) were selected proportionately through simple random sampling, 289 learners were selected through proportionate stratified and simple random sampling and 45 teachers of English (one per school) were selected purposively. The sample of 334 respondents was determined from a population of 25,898 using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Data were collected using learners' and teachers' questionnaires, interviews with selected teachers of English and group discussions with selected learners from the sampled sub-counties, and a document analysis checklist. Validity was established through expert review and alignment of the instruments with the study objectives and variables, while pilot testing in Trana Nzoia County with about 29 learners and a few teachers of English and Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.768 to 0.913, all above the 0.70 threshold, confirmed reliability. After obtaining NACOSTI and county education authorization, the researcher administered the questionnaires and conducted the interviews, group discussions and document analysis in the sampled schools. Quantitative data were analysed in SPSS version 29 using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed thematically and documentary evidence using predetermined indicators, with findings triangulated across sources.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles to protect participants' rights, dignity and welfare. Approval was obtained from the University of Eldoret, and research authorization from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), with permission from the county and sub-county education offices and school administrations. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent from teachers, parental or guardian consent and assent from learners, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by coding questionnaires, interview records and group discussion participants, storing all data securely, accessing documents only with authorization, and reporting findings honestly without revealing participants' identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study assessed the return rate to establish the proportion of the sampled respondents who successfully participated in the study and provided data for analysis. The study targeted a total of 334 respondents, comprising 289 Grade 7 learners and 45 Teachers of English from selected public junior schools in Turbo, Ainabkoi, Kapseret, Soy, Kesses and Moiben sub-counties of Uasin Gishu County. Questionnaires were administered to both Grade 7 learners and teachers of English, while qualitative data were collected through interviews with Teachers of English and group discussions with Grade 7 learners.

A total of 285 questionnaires were successfully completed and returned, comprising 250 questionnaires from Grade 7 learners and 35 questionnaires from teachers of English. This represented an overall questionnaire return rate of 85.3%. The response rate for Grade 7 learners was 86.5%, while that of Teachers of English was 77.8%. The relatively high response rates provided an adequate basis for quantitative data analysis. The study also conducted interviews and group discussions as planned to obtain qualitative information that complemented the questionnaire findings. The response rates are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Return Rate

Instruments	Administered	Returned	Return rate
Grade 7 Learners'	289	250	86.5
Teachers of English	45	35	77.8
Total Questionnaires	**334**	**285**	**85.3**

Source; (Survey data, 2026)

Table 1 shows that the study achieved an overall questionnaire return rate of 85.3%, with Grade 7 learners

recording a higher return rate of 86.5% compared with 77.8% among teachers of English. The response rates were considered adequate for the analysis because they provided a substantial proportion of the targeted respondents from whom the study obtained quantitative data. The returned questionnaires therefore formed the basis for the subsequent descriptive and inferential analysis of the study findings.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Integrated Instructional Approaches

The fourth objective of the study sought to identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing integrated instructional approaches in teaching English writing among Grade 7 learners in public junior schools in Uasin Gishu County. The study examined challenges related to teaching and learning resources, class size, teacher preparedness, professional training, learner engagement and differences in learners' English proficiency. Teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Undecided (U), 4 = Agree (A), and

5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Integrated Instructional Approaches

		SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	Mean	Std. Dev
Limited teaching and learning resources hinder the implementation of integrated instructional approaches.	F	0	7	2	15	11	35	3.86	1.089
	%	0.0	20.0	5.7	42.9	31.4	100.0		
Large class sizes make it difficult to provide individual attention and feedback.	F	0	4	3	17	11	35	4.00	.939
	%	0.0	11.4	8.6	48.6	31.4	100.0		
Limited teacher preparedness affects the effective implementation of integrated writing instruction.	F	0	3	2	20	10	35	4.06	.838
	%	0.0	8.6	5.7	57.1	28.6	100.0		
Gaps in professional training limit teachers' ability to use integrated instructional approaches effectively.	F	0	3	6	15	11	35	3.97	.923
	%	0.0	8.6	17.1	42.9	31.4	100.0		
Low learner engagement and motivation make it difficult to implement interactive writing activities.	F	0	0	5	28	2	35	3.91	.445
	%	0.0	0.0	14.3	80.0	5.7	100.0		
Differences in learners' English proficiency make it difficult to implement integrated instructional approaches effectively.	F	3	2	0	9	21	35	4.23	1.262
	%	8.6	5.7	0.0	25.7	60.0	100.0		

Key: F = Frequency, %= Percentage (%), M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation. Source; (Survey data, 2026)

The findings in Table 2 indicate that teachers experienced several challenges in implementing integrated instructional approaches. The most prominent challenge was differences in learners' English proficiency, with 30 teachers (85.7%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that variations in learners' proficiency made implementation difficult. The item recorded the highest mean score of 4.23 (SD = 1.262). This finding suggests that differences in learners' abilities may make it difficult for teachers to plan and deliver writing activities that adequately meet the needs of all learners.

This finding is consistent with Tedeneke (2022), who found that differences in learners' language proficiency impeded teachers' ability to effectively implement writing instruction in an Ethiopian secondary-school EFL context. Similarly, Liang (2024) demonstrated that differentiated instruction can help teachers accommodate learner diversity in English writing classrooms, suggesting that variation in learner readiness requires teachers to adapt instructional activities and provide differentiated support.

Limited teacher preparedness was also identified as a significant challenge. A total of 30 teachers (85.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that limited teacher preparedness affected the effective implementation of integrated writing instruction, while only 3 (8.6%) disagreed and 2 (5.7%) were undecided. The item recorded a mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.838). The relatively high mean indicates that most teachers perceived their level of preparedness as an important factor influencing implementation. Integrated instructional approaches require teachers to combine different strategies appropriately and to move flexibly between process-based, genre-based and product-oriented practices. Inadequate preparedness may therefore limit teachers' ability to select suitable activities, sequence instruction effectively and provide appropriate support to learners. Tedeneke (2022), who reported that inadequate teachers' pedagogical competence in teaching writing was among the factors constraining effective classroom writing practices, supports this finding.

Large class sizes were another important challenge reported by teachers. A total of 28 teachers (80.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that large classes made it difficult to provide individual attention and feedback, while 4 (11.4%) disagreed and 3 (8.6%) were undecided. The mean score was 4.00 (SD = 0.939).

This finding suggests that the number of learners in a classroom can constrain the effective implementation of writing instruction, particularly where approaches require active learner participation, teacher guidance, peer interaction and individualised feedback. Writing development often requires teachers to examine learners' written work and provide specific comments on areas such as grammar, organisation, coherence and vocabulary. The finding concurs with Atuhura and Nambi (2024), whose study of Teachers' of English implementing competence-based curriculum innovations in Uganda identified large class sizes, scarcity of instructional materials and time constraints as major challenges affecting classroom implementation.

Gaps in professional training were similarly identified as a challenge. Twenty-six teachers (74.3%) agreed that gaps in professional training limited their ability to use integrated instructional approaches effectively, while 3 (8.6%) disagreed and 6 (17.1%) were undecided. The mean score of 3.97 (SD = 0.923) indicates a generally high level of agreement. The finding suggests that teachers may require continuous professional development to strengthen their knowledge and practical skills in integrating different writing instructional approaches. Although teachers may understand individual writing strategies, effective integration requires an understanding of when and how different approaches can complement one another in developing learners' writing competencies.

This finding is supported by Olson et al. (2023), whose study demonstrated the importance of teacher professional development in implementing evidence-based writing instruction for

English learners.

Their intervention showed that practice-based professional development enabled teachers to implement the writing intervention with high fidelity and was associated with significant improvements in learners' writing outcomes.

The availability of teaching and learning resources was also reported as a challenge. Twenty six teachers

(74.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that limited teaching and learning resources hindered the implementation of integrated instructional approaches, compared with 7 (20.0%) who disagreed and 2 (5.7%) who were undecided. The mean score was 3.86 (SD = 1.089). This finding indicates that inadequate instructional materials may restrict teachers' ability to expose learners to a variety of texts, model compositions, writing exercises and other resources needed for effective writing instruction. Resources such as textbooks, model texts, reference materials and appropriate classroom writing materials can support the demonstration and practice of different writing strategies. The finding strongly corresponds with Atuhura and Nambi (2024), who identified scarcity of instructional materials as one of the major challenges experienced by Teachers' of English implementing curriculum innovations in Uganda.

Low learner engagement and motivation also emerged as a challenge, although the responses were more concentrated around agreement. Thirty teachers (85.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that low learner engagement and motivation made it difficult to implement interactive writing activities, while 5 (14.3%) were undecided and none disagreed. The mean score was 3.91 (SD = 0.445). The relatively small standard deviation indicates considerable consistency in teachers' responses.

This finding suggests that even where teachers are prepared to use collaborative and learner centred activities, limited learner participation or motivation may reduce the effectiveness of such approaches. Interactive writing instruction requires learners to discuss ideas, analyse texts, participate in guided practice, provide or receive feedback and engage actively in developing their written work. Liang (2024), who found that differentiated instructional strategies could provide opportunities for participation and accommodate learner diversity in English writing instruction, supports the importance of adapting instruction to learner characteristics.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers face multiple and interconnected challenges in implementing integrated instructional approaches for English writing. Differences in learners' English proficiency emerged as the most prominent challenge, followed by limited teacher preparedness, large class sizes, gaps in professional training, low learner engagement and limited teaching and learning resources. The findings imply that the successful implementation of integrated writing instruction requires more than teachers' willingness to use different approaches. It also depends on teachers having adequate professional preparation, manageable class sizes, sufficient instructional resources and strategies for addressing differences in learners' proficiency and motivation. Addressing these challenges would therefore create a more supportive environment for the effective integration of process-based, genre-based and product-oriented instructional approaches in Grade 7 English writing classrooms.

The final interview question examined the challenges teachers encountered when implementing process-based, genre-based and product-oriented approaches. The findings revealed several challenges, including inadequate teaching and learning resources, large class sizes, limited teacher preparedness, gaps in professional training, low learner engagement and differences in learners' English proficiency. Large class sizes were particularly important because process-based instruction requires teachers to provide individualised feedback on learners' drafts. One teacher explained:

> Teacher 3: "The number of learners makes it difficult to give every learner detailed feedback. You may give them a writing task, but checking every draft and helping each learner revise takes a lot of time."

This response is consistent with the quantitative findings, where large class sizes recorded a mean of 4.00. It also helps explain why revision and feedback emerged as comparatively weaker components of process-based instruction. Differences in learners' English proficiency were another major challenge. Teachers indicated that learners do not enter the classroom with similar levels of vocabulary, grammar and writing competence. Consequently, some learners require more scaffolding than others. This finding corresponds with the highest mean of 4.23 recorded for differences in learners' English proficiency.

Teacher preparedness and professional training were also identified as important considerations. The quantitative results showed means of 4.06 for limited teacher preparedness and 3.97 for gaps in professional training. These findings suggest that teachers require continuous professional development to strengthen their knowledge and practical application of integrated writing approaches.

Olson et al. (2023), who demonstrated that practice-based professional development could improve teachers' implementation of evidence-based writing instruction and produce significant gains in learners' writing outcomes, support this interpretation.

Thematic Analysis of Group Discussion Findings

The group discussions provided qualitative evidence on how Grade 7 learners experience integrated instructional approaches in English writing. Learners described writing as an activity in which teachers provide guidance before, during and after writing, and their accounts indicated that process-based, genre-based and product-oriented activities complement one another. Process-based activities helped them generate, organise and refine ideas; genre-based activities helped them understand the purposes and conventions of different text types; and product-oriented activities provided models, structured practice and clear expectations for the final text.

Learners identified several benefits of these practices. Teacher scaffolding, including introducing the topic, questioning and brainstorming, helped them activate prior knowledge and plan before drafting. As one learner explained, "The teacher first gives us the topic and asks us questions about it, then we write the points before we start the composition.

" Model texts and teacher demonstrations made the features of different genres visible and reduced uncertainty about what was expected, while teacher and peer feedback helped them identify errors in grammar, spelling and expression. Pair and group work added a further source of support: "When we work in groups, we get different ideas from our friends, and sometimes someone explains a word or sentence that you do not understand." Learners also noted, however, that revision was less systematic than planning and drafting and tended to focus on surface accuracy rather than on content and organisation.

Despite these benefits, the learners identified several contextual and instructional challenges. Inadequate learning resources emerged as an important concern. Learners indicated that limited access to textbooks, model compositions and other writing materials restricts opportunities for independent practice. Where resources are insufficient, learners become more dependent on teacher explanations and classroom examples. The findings therefore suggest that availability of appropriate learning materials is important for sustaining integrated writing instruction.

Large class sizes and limited teacher support were also identified as significant challenges.

Learners explained that teachers may not have sufficient time to provide individual attention and detailed feedback to every learner. As a result, some learners may complete writing tasks without receiving the assistance required to correct or improve their work. This finding corresponds with the teachers' quantitative responses, which showed that large class sizes make it difficult to provide individual attention and feedback. The qualitative findings therefore strengthen the evidence that classroom conditions can affect the successful implementation of process-based and other integrated approaches.

Another challenge concerned differences in learners' English proficiency. Learners reported that some classmates generate ideas and complete writing tasks more quickly, while others require additional explanation and assistance. Such differences can make it difficult for teachers to maintain a uniform pace. Learners with weaker English proficiency may experience difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, organisation and completion of writing tasks. This finding reinforces the quantitative result in which differences in learners' English proficiency recorded a high level of agreement among teachers as a challenge to implementing integrated instructional approaches.

The learners also identified motivation, participation and task completion as challenges. Writing tasks may become difficult when learners lack sufficient ideas, encounter unfamiliar topics or are expected to produce lengthy compositions within limited time. Some learners may also lack confidence to participate in discussions or share their writing with classmates.

Nevertheless, learners indicated that teacher guidance, group work, brainstorming and model texts can increase participation by giving them ideas and reducing uncertainty. This suggests that motivation is partly influenced by how writing activities are structured and the extent to which learners receive appropriate support.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The study established that teachers encountered several challenges in implementing integrated instructional approaches for English writing. The most prominent challenge was differences in learners' English proficiency. A total of 30 teachers (85.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that differences in learners' proficiency made implementation difficult, with the highest mean score of 4.23 (SD = 1.262). This finding indicates that variations in learners' vocabulary, grammar, fluency and writing competence made it difficult for teachers to design and deliver activities that adequately addressed the needs of all learners.

Limited teacher preparedness was another major challenge, with 30 teachers (85.7%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that limited preparedness affected effective implementation. The item recorded a mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.838). Large class sizes also presented a significant challenge, with 80.0% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that large classes made it difficult to provide individual attention and feedback, recording a mean of 4.00 (SD = 0.939). Similarly, gaps in professional training recorded a mean of 3.97 (SD = 0.923), indicating the need for continued professional development.

Limited teaching and learning resources also hindered implementation, with 74.3% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing and a mean of 3.86 (SD = 1.089). Low learner engagement and motivation recorded a mean of 3.91 (SD = 0.445), with 85.7% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that it made implementation of interactive writing activities difficult. Overall, the findings demonstrate that successful integration of process-based, genre-based and product-oriented approaches depends not only on teachers' pedagogical choices but also on adequate resources, teacher preparedness, manageable class sizes, professional development and strategies for addressing learner diversity and motivation.

Conclusion

Despite the potential of integrated instructional approaches, the study concludes that their implementation is constrained by several contextual and pedagogical challenges. Differences in learners' English proficiency emerged as the most significant challenge, followed by limited teacher preparedness, large class sizes, gaps in professional training, low learner engagement and inadequate teaching and learning resources. These challenges may limit teachers' ability to provide individualised guidance, differentiated instruction, meaningful collaboration and timely feedback. Therefore, effective integration requires supportive school environments, adequate instructional resources, continuous teacher development and strategies for managing learner diversity.

Recommendations

i. Ministry of Education: The Ministry of Education should provide adequate writing resources such as model texts and reference materials, recruit more English teachers to reduce class sizes, and organise regular practice-based training on integrated writing instruction and differentiated support for learners.
ii. Heads of Institutions: Heads of institutions should facilitate the acquisition and use of writing resources, timetable adequate time for feedback, support in-school mentoring and peer learning among English teachers, and encourage remedial and group-based activities that help learners with weaker English proficiency.
iii. English language teachers: English language teachers should continuously upgrade their skills in blending process-based, genre-based and product-oriented approaches, use differentiated tasks, peer feedback and group work to manage large classes and mixed proficiency, and design motivating writing activities that sustain learner engagement.

Suggestions for Further Studies

i. Conduct comparative studies between public and private junior schools to establish whether differences in resources, class sizes and teacher support influence the implementation and effectiveness of integrated writing instruction.

ii. Undertake experimental or longitudinal studies to determine the effect of practice-based professional development programmes on teachers' preparedness and on the sustained implementation of integrated instructional approaches and learners' writing performance over time.

iii. Investigate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction, peer feedback and technology-supported tools in addressing differences in learners' English proficiency and large class sizes to improve Grade 7 writing outcomes across other counties.

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