



HANDWRITING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This is an article to bring to light the futility of imposing a particular style of handwriting but rather to encourage a child to adapt to a style of handwriting that he/she is comfortable with from the early stage of schooling. It is a study to conclude logically from analysis of data drawn from students at Higher education that the academic performance of a child in the Higher education is less of the style of handwriting and more significantly of the graceful presentation of the content of the material. In a written communication, the success is when the reader is able to read and understand the message intended to be conveyed.

Key Words: *Cursive, Print, Academic Performance, Style of Handwriting.*

Introduction

With the increasing popularity of technology use in learning, the importance of handwriting proficiency has declined in its significance (Carpenter, 2007, cited in Zachry, A. H., et al., 2016). However, studies confirm that mastering handwriting skills play an important role in academic achievement. Therefore, it is important to educate teachers to enforce handwriting skills in the classroom, particularly at a young age. As Brown, (2018) states, “Daily handwriting instruction really becomes a time saver for educators, because once children learn the foundational skills of writing, they can produce their work quickly and efficiently”

Communication is the core of human relationship. Human have learned and master the art of communication not only orally and sign or body language but effectively through written form. This art of communication has played a significant role in the growth and development of humanity. It has helped in preserving and advancement of knowledge. Communities with written form of communities have witness faster growth and development. History has been written and rewritten because of the written records or drawings discovered.

There are different languages and dialects with or without script. In the oral communication, the tone accompanied with the body expression is important in communicating the meaning of the word successfully. This form of communication may fail due to various communication barriers. Much of the oral communication barriers can be overcome by effective written communication. The success of human communication is decoding and understanding the message send orally, body language or in writing. Of all these means of communication, writing is the most comprehensive and the best way to preserve the message.

Human have used different medium to write the intended message to be communicated. They have carved it in rocks, metal, hide, bark, papers, computer chips etc. until recently and even today hand



written form of communication is very common. Therefore invention of script and the written form of communication is one of the greatest discovery of mankind.

Review of Literature

Despite technological advancement, there are two types of handwriting that students have generally chosen as a means of written communication, cursive or manuscript (Sassoon, 1990) as cited in Schwellnus, Cameron, & Carnahan, (2012). Choosing which format of written output to use for young children has been a topic of debate for decades and still continues today (Schwellnus et al., 2012).

Supporters of manuscript writing claims that “Manuscript is easier for the beginner to learn; Manuscript is typically more legible; Manuscript gives greater satisfaction to pupils, especially in the primary grades; Manuscript contributes more to reading and spelling.” and on the other side supporters of cursive argue and claim that “Cursive is typically more rapid; Cursive is more useful; satisfying demands for rapid personal uses as well as for legible business and social needs.” (Gates & Brown, 1929). Even teachers and parents are caught up in deciding which is the best writing style for their students because many attributes are being given to each style of writing (Herrick, 1961).

A study conducted by Carter showed that the cursive handwriting of students deteriorated as they climb towards high school, and teachers had to ask students to type their assignments. The research committee also found that manuscript “promotes skill in reading and language; more legible; that it reduces eyestrain; that it is faster than cursive writing for little children and faster or as fast as cursive writing for older children; that it correlates better with reading, language, spelling, and art.” (Carter, 1953). Herrick (1961) found arguments that supports manuscript because it is easier, helps in coordination, and clearer to read but at the same time it is time consuming, no individuality and not applicable for signature legally.

Several researchers (Zachry, 2016) show that writing by hand has a positive impact on learners’ “reading acquisition, recall, motor skills, composition skills, and academic performance in children” (pg. 1). Developing sound or sturdy handwriting skills promotes self-esteem and one can become better critical thinker, writer, and reader (Brown, 2018).

Research experts have emphasized the significance of incorporating both print and cursive writing that will enable learners to communicate effectively with eloquence and smoothness. However, Brown (2018), Morin, Lavoie, & Montesinos 2012, and Amundson & Wiel (as cited in Zachry, et al., 2016) give importance to cursive writing as a tool to the child intellectual development. This finding contradicts to the findings of Graham, Berninger, Weintraub, and Schafer (as cited in Morin, Lavoie, & Isabelle, 2012) points out that learners who are taught combined manuscript - cursive or manuscript have faster writing speed than the ones taught cursive writing only. In other word Zviane and Watson study reveal that students write faster in printing than cursive. This finding concurs to Morin, Lavoie, & Montesinos (2012) and Zachry, et al. (2016) finding in which they support that cursive style weakens writing speed of learners.

Despite the controversy between cursive and print writing, educators stress that the style of handwriting does matter because it does not have any effect on the writing quality (Morin, Lavoie, & Montesinos 2012). However, it is important to incorporating handwriting instruction at the very young age because it influences learners’ academic performance. According to McCarroll, H., & Fletcher, T. (2017) there is a



strong relationship between handwriting quality and academic success, particularly in the writing and reading skills and thus it is important to allot time for handwriting instruction in the classroom.

The styles of writing

Every individual is unique In the world of writing. Those that can write use different style of writing the script. The most common styles of writing are; Cursive, print, and D'Nealian which may or may not be applicable to some language. Whichever script, but it is important to write it legibly, aesthetically, and neatly.

- a. Cursive: A style of writing where the letters or alphabets of a word are joined or connected. It is very stylish and beautiful if written well. It is not suitable to all languages
- b. Print: A style of writing in which each letter or alphabet is separate and distinct. It is very neat when written well and suits all scripts.

Methodology

For the study questionnaire and interview was done with the college students who have done well in their semester examinations. The sample for the study was selected from among those who have scored 80% in the Undergraduate and Post Graduate (UG & PG) semester exam and above with the intention to find out their style of handwriting, the reasons for opting the particular style, and the relation of handwriting with their academic results. Most of the sample are of economically weaker section of the society.

Findings

1. Students view on Handwriting

Sample size (UG & PG):

Style of handwriting	Sample With 70% above	%
Cursive	91	57
Print	69	43
Total	160	100

Highest score (69 students score above 80%) interviewed:

Score	Cursive	%	Print	%
80 – 84	18	26	21	30
85 - 89	09	13	15	21
90 and above	03	05	03	05
Total	30	43	39	57

On close examination of the student sample, it reveals that the percentage of student scoring 70% above between Cursive and manuscript style of handwriting is 14% which seem to be significant but on the other hand when considering the same sample scoring above 80% we find that manuscript style outperforms the cursive. Therefore it can be drawn to conclusion that the academic performance of a student in the Higher education is not determine by the style of handwriting but on the hard work, time and effort committed by the student in his studies.

Students are of the opinion that the style of handwriting doesn't matter but neatness and speed is critical. Most of them have struggled with cursive writing in their childhood and they either continued with

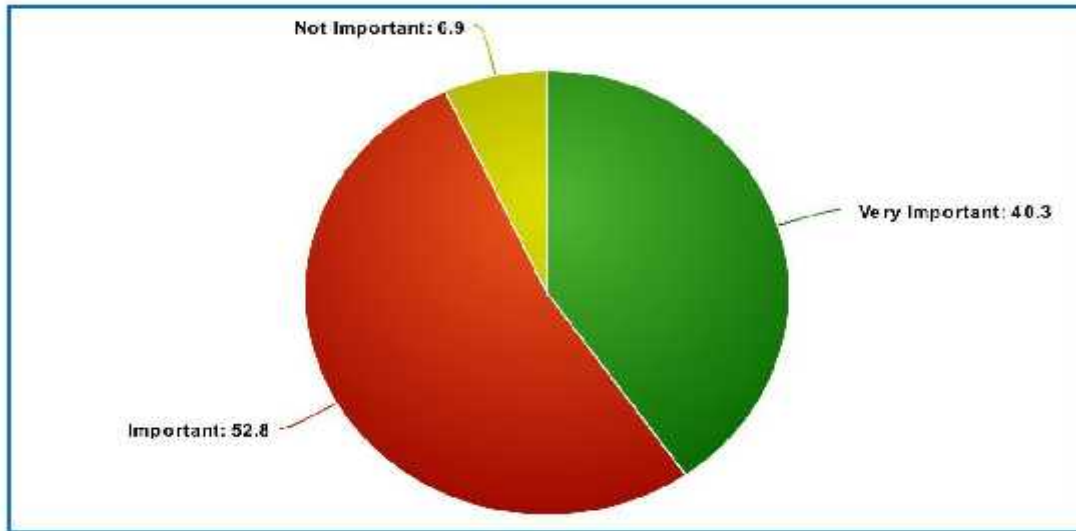


cursive or eventually changed to manuscript due to factors such as ease, faster, style, neatness, beauty, comfortable etc. Their choice of handwriting have also been greatly influenced by the teacher. They attribute their success more to the time spend in study and regular class attendance. The style of handwriting also does not have an adverse impact on the time management during test or exams.

2. Teachers view on handwriting

A questionnaire was also done with the 72 Teachers teaching in the Higher Education to find out the significance of handwriting in the academic success of a student.

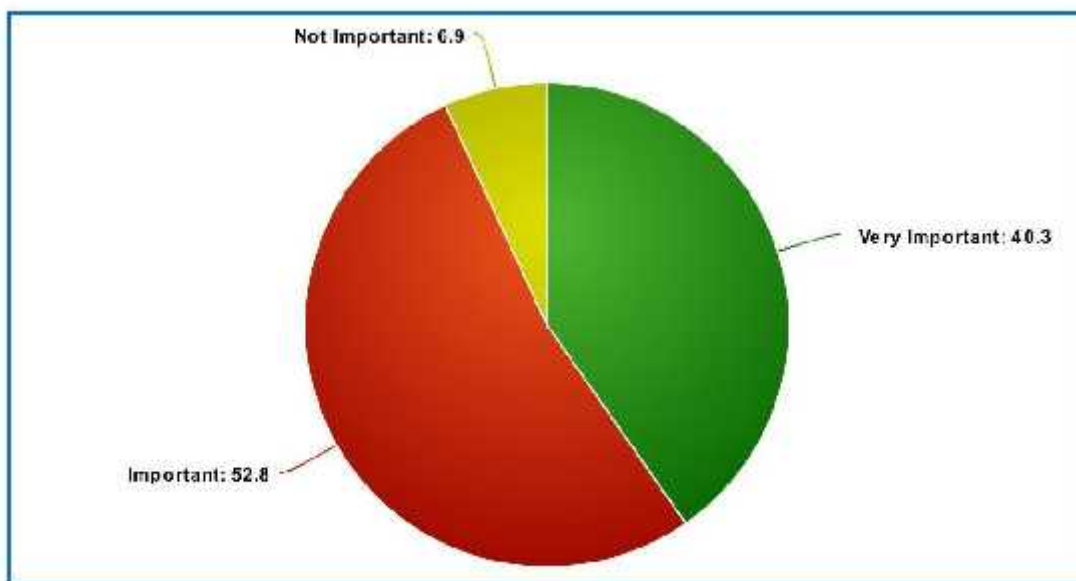
How important is handwriting to student's academic success in tests and exams?



Very Important Important Not Important

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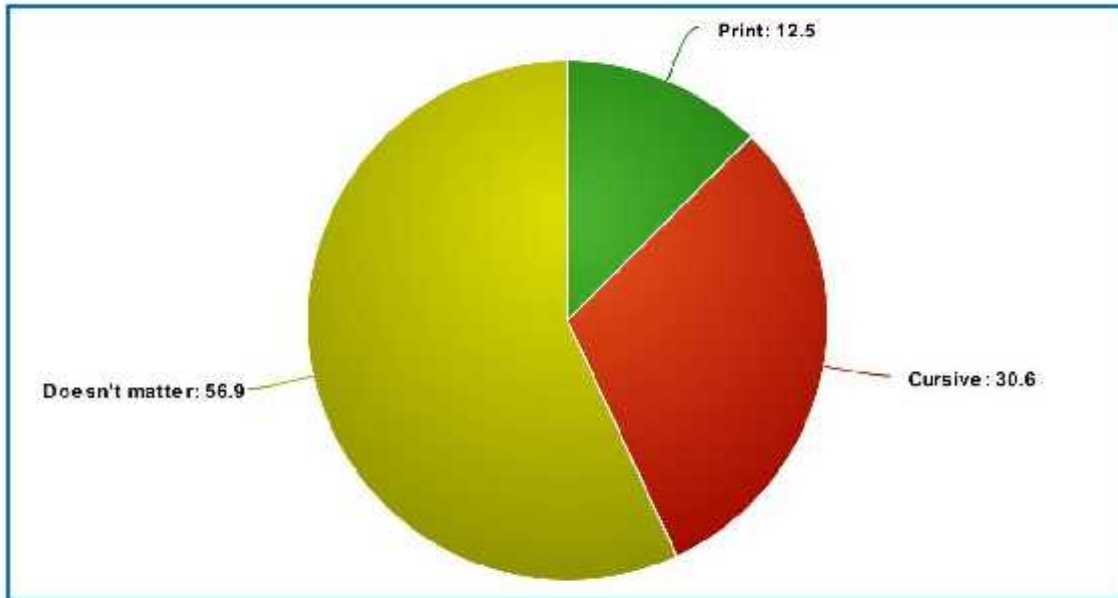


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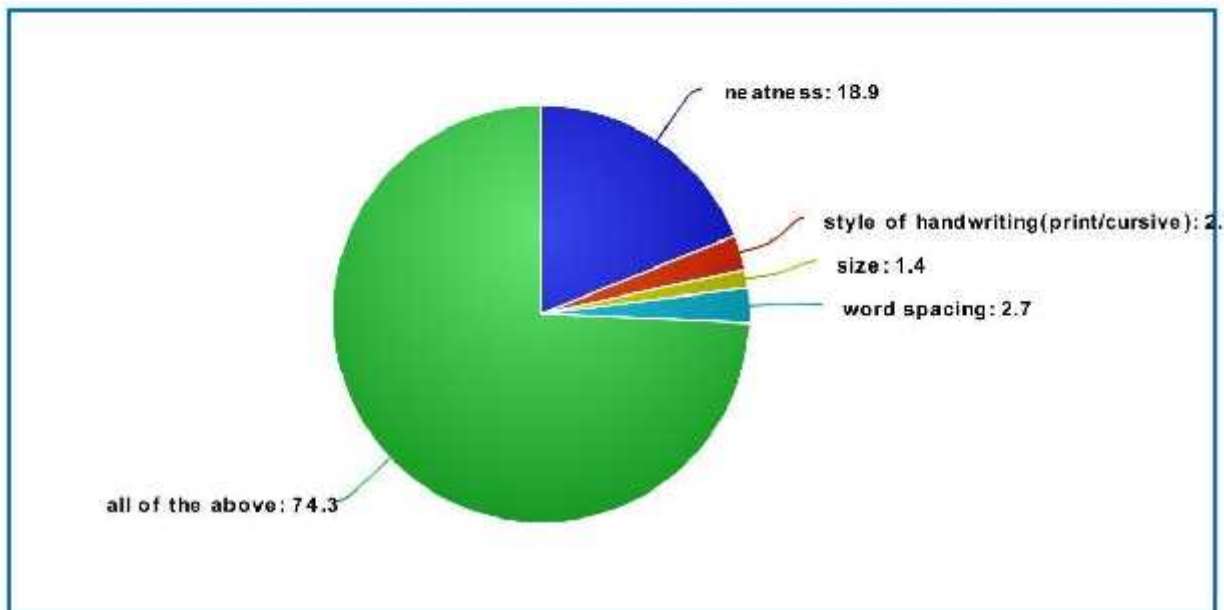
What style of handwriting impress you?



Print Cursive Doesn't matter

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What is important in handwriting?

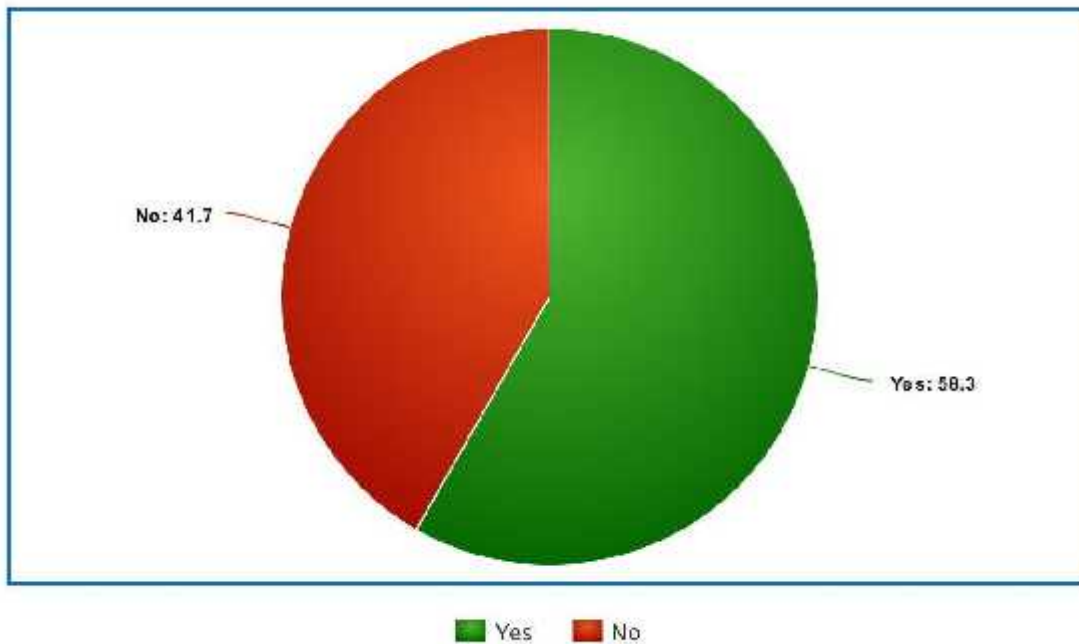


neatness style of handwriting (print/cursive) size word spacing
all of the above

meta-chart.com



Is your paper evaluation influenced by the style of handwriting of the student?



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Teachers consider handwriting to be an important element for academic success but not necessarily the most important. To a teacher the style of writing doesn't matter as long as it is neat, spaced well, is of normal size and legible but of all these neatness of writing is paramount as it will give a positive impression of the student. According to the teachers graceful presentation of the material in writing reveals the mental state of mind, preparedness, clarity of thought, and expression, competency, hand work, diligence and create a more positive impression upon the mind of the reader.

Conclusions

The study has clearly indicated that the style of handwriting doesn't really matter but the communication of the content of the message through neat and readable handwriting is the matter of the subject. Thus, handwriting does contribute to the success of the person academically by impressing and reflecting the nature, knowledge and commitment of a person. Therefore, it will be important to encourage a child to learn to write any style of handwriting but emphasized on the importance of writing it neatly because eventually it is not the style but the comfort, speed, neatness, and successful communication of the meaning of the message matters most. It will be of paramount importance for the teachers to identify the style of handwriting the child is comfortable with and nurture it from an early age. As long as the handwriting is neat and clear, style doesn't matter because content and application determines academic success and not the style of handwriting.

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