

**REVISITING “WRITING IN SPITE OF TEACHERS:
ISSUES IN TEACHING WRITING
(TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO)” 20 YEARS LATER**

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This article investigated the extent to which Watts’ (1993) claim that English teachers in Trinidad and Tobago used “simplistic, unintegrated and outdated strategies for teaching writing” (p. 68) was true. Four in-service English teacher trainees participated in the study, which used data from observation of lessons, post-lesson interviews, and tutor comments to the teacher trainees as its sources of data. The study found support for Watts’ claim, but only in teachers’ initial teaching practices; their more informed practice showed some alignment with best practices in writing instruction.

Introduction

Writing pervades contemporary life. Text appears in forms as diverse as advertising billboards, social media posts and feeds, emails, journalistic reportage, letters advancing propositions, reports and notices within organizations, as well as more academic prose intended for specialist audiences. As Graham and Perin (2007) observe, “the explosion of electronic and wireless communication in everyday life brings writing skills into play as never before” (p. 8). Since these diverse genres meet the needs of writers and their audiences, it is important that adolescents acquire proficiency in producing them whilst at school. Graham and Perin underscore this point:

Writing well is not just an option for young people – it is a necessity. Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy. (p. 3)

Consequently, writing is at the heart of the secondary school curriculum, more so the English language arts curriculum.

Secondary schools in the Anglophone Caribbean, such as those in Trinidad and Tobago, teach writing in English language arts to adolescents for whom English is a second language, and a vernacular of English is their first language or L1 (Craig, 2006). For this population, therefore, learning to write means learning to write in a second language,

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though that target language shares much of the lexicon of their L1. Teachers, especially English teachers, bear the responsibility for enabling these adolescents to produce (and comprehend) a variety of academic discourse types.

Teachers' Instructional Practices

Student success in writing (achieving more than minimum standards) requires expert instruction because “writing is an enormously complex activity and...students need a lot of practice in order to master the many skills and subskills required to become competent writers” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007, p. 3). Research into what teachers actually do to develop students' writing skills has painted a relatively dim picture of writing instruction, though successive meta-analyses of the literature do indicate improvements in practice.

Early studies in the United States (US), such as Applebee's (1984) large, three-part study of writing instruction across the curriculum at two high schools—which involved 309 observations—as well as surveys of teachers at 196 schools and case studies of the students in those schools, produced disturbing data. Applebee found that little actual teaching of writing occurred; “instruction” was mostly testing of previous learning. Feedback from teachers comprised mostly error correction in writing mechanics, and “comments concerned with the ideas the student was expressing were the least frequently reported” (Applebee, 1984, pp. 90-91).

Eighteen years later, Hillocks' (2002) study of writing in five states in the US indicated that significant change had occurred in writing classrooms:

1. As a consequence of state assessments, teachers were teaching multi-paragraph compositions.
2. Teachers spent significant time preparing for writing, such as having students brainstorm for ideas, read and study models of writing, and analyse their characteristics in class.
3. Teachers reported paying attention to audience and having students address these in writing assignments.
4. Teachers reported using model pieces of writing, as well as using class time for peers to respond to each other's writing.

The major drawback of Hillocks' survey was that it used self-reported data, and there were no observations of actual classrooms to verify respondents' claims.

More recently, Scherff and Piazza (2005) surveyed 1801 high school

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students at four schools in Florida, US. The authors found that “many students were not guaranteed multiple opportunities to write, nor were they given adequate exposure to best practices in instruction as advocated in the empirical and pedagogic literatures” (p. 289). For example, 43% of students across school type and grade levels reported never having written expressively or poetically; research-based writing was “seldom if ever done” (p. 289), even at a top-ranked school; whilst students reported writing drafts, feedback, and revision were not a part of daily routine. Large numbers of students did report, though, that their teachers modelled writing instruction. Like the Hillocks (2002) study, Scherff and Piazza’s survey depends entirely on self-reported data, so their findings need to be treated with with some caution.

Antecedent to the Present Study

The foregoing description of teachers’ practices comes from research of US school contexts. In 1993, Margaret Watts presented an overview of what was then known about teaching writing, how students learn to write, what teachers need to know, and “current practice.” Drawing heavily on the work of Hillocks (1986) and Raimes (1991), Watts argued for secondary English teachers to place less emphasis on “form” and more on the writer, the content, and the reader. Such an approach, she argued, would de-emphasize correctness in favour of expression of ideas, although she did acknowledge that the peculiar linguistic situation in the Caribbean requires that teachers make explicit the differences between students’ home language and the Standard variety. It should be noted that whilst Watts titled this section of her paper “How students learn to write,” this topic is not explicitly addressed and is subsumed under “What we know about teaching writing.”

In terms of approaches to writing instruction that focus on the writer, Watts (1993) recognized that writing process was an important advance because it shifted teachers’ attention to during-writing interventions, as opposed to simply providing feedback at the end. However, she lamented that in the period 1981-1991 only three curriculum studies (action research reports produced by Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed.) students) focusing specifically on writing as a process had been written at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine.

With respect to content approaches to teaching writing, Watts (1993) defined it as pedagogy that “attaches writing to various subjects across the curriculum” (p. 61). However, she noted that students on the Dip.Ed. (hereafter called teacher trainees) had had little success with such

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interventions in their classrooms because of “the constraints of the course requirements and the time allocated to the study” (p. 62). That is, she attributed the lack of success to factors operating outside of teachers’ control. Finally, Watts looked at approaches that focus on the reader, which she saw as reflected in the Caribbean Examinations Council’s Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) syllabus as a concern with register. This she considered a positive instructional focus or “antidote” (p. 62) to writers’ penchant for writing only for their teachers, peers, and themselves.

In the section of her paper titled “What the teacher needs to know and current practice,” Watts (1993) identified three major practices that characterize teachers’ writing pedagogy:

1. Correcting students’ language errors whilst ignoring what they are thinking and trying to communicate
2. Creating teacher-centred classrooms in which students continue in a “state of dependence on the teacher” because he/she has not provided them with criteria for judging the quality of their own work (p. 64)
3. Providing surface level feedback such as “noting errors, commenting on form or content (text specific), or emoting and praising” (p. 64)

To address these issues, Watts proposed that teachers must:

- know that they have to write and “analyse their own processes” (p. 63) in order to experience and respond to problems their own students face in learning to write;
- have linguistic pragmatic knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge;
- know about classroom management, interpersonal relations, and “personal histories of the students” (p. 63);
- know that focusing on linguistic form in writing instruction communicates that the teacher values this more than content or appropriateness; and
- take responsibility for helping students “recognize that they are writers” (p. 64) by organizing their entry into a community of writers.

Finally, Watts (1993) observed that reading and writing “go hand in hand with listening and speaking” (p. 65). In the “heavily oral context of the Caribbean,” she argued that children can be motivated to read through writing, especially if they have not developed a habit of reading,

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or cannot read well; thus she said reading and writing should be taught together.

Watts (1993) made two main recommendations:

1. In-service workshops should be organized, so that teachers come to know useful ways of intervening in the writing process, explore their own writing processes, and learn strategies for teaching writing and organizing their classrooms.
2. Further research should "describe contextual features of classrooms and successful teaching and learning strategies" (p. 67).

She saw classroom teachers as best positioned to do such research. However, she claimed that teachers "continue to use rather simplistic, unintegrated and outdated strategies for teaching writing" (p. 68) (namely, ignoring the communicative function of writing, creating teacher-centred classrooms, and providing superficial corrective feedback).

This blunt assessment of in-service English teachers' instructional practices in Trinidad and Tobago was made 20 years ago, but since then there has been no attempt to address these two intertwined "issues" (intertwined since any description of contexts in which successful teaching and learning strategies are used would, by implication, indicate that teaching was not simplistic, unintegrated, and based on outdated strategies). Consequently, there is no evidence to suggest whether in the intervening years the situation has remained the same or improved. If it is the former, then adolescents in schools are being left unprepared for working with texts; if it is the latter, then research is needed to describe and analyse what has proven successful.

Purpose and Delimitation of the Present Study

This study used a multiple case study design (Yin, 2014) to investigate to what extent Watts' (1993) declaration that teachers "continue to use rather simplistic, unintegrated and outdated strategies for teaching writing" (p. 68) holds true two decades after it was made. It was expected that answering this question would, by extension, shed light on any progress English teachers have made in researching their own writing classrooms to find "successful teaching and learning strategies" (p. 67). The investigation was delimited to in-service English teachers enrolled in a Dip.Ed. programme, that is, the study confines itself to the same type of sample Watts referred to.

This article does not address two aspects of Watts' study: 1) how students learn to write, and 2) the relationship of writing to the other

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linguaging modes. With respect to the former, Watts' original question, "What do we know about teaching writing and how students learn to write?" is a double-barrelled question, so it was split into two, and the second question on how students learn to write was removed because it would extend the paper to an unmanageable scope, given the increased body of knowledge available for answering the first part of the question (in the review of literature). With respect to the latter aspect (writing and other languaging modes), the decision was taken to omit this in favour of increasing the space required to explore the research question that directed the study.

Research Question

To what extent is it true that teachers (enrolled in the Dip.Ed.) "... use rather simplistic, unintegrated and outdated strategies for teaching writing" (p. 68)?

Significance

Effective writing instruction is key to students' academic success. Since secondary school students depend on their teachers for efficient instruction (National Writing Project, 2006), and teachers gain formal training in writing methods during teacher training, data about the latter's practices can serve two purposes: 1) it can indicate to what extent teachers are meeting students' instructional needs; and 2) it can inform teacher educators' understandings about what works in teacher training, and what issues need addressing.

Review of Literature

What Is Effective Writing Instruction?

For teachers and teacher educators in the English-speaking Caribbean, answers to the question, "What constitutes effective writing instruction?" must be guided by the fact that it is instruction for Creole-influenced vernacular (CIV) speakers (Craig, 2006). The review that follows examines the research database on L2 English writing as well as L1 English writing because (a) the latter is significantly more developed than the former, and (b) some practices used in L1 English writing pedagogy are applicable to CIV speakers.

Best Practices in L2 Writing Instruction

It is a measure of the difference between research into writing instruction for native versus non-native speakers of English that a library database search for "best practices in writing instruction" returns significant scholarship on L1 English writing, and virtually nothing on best practices in L2 English writing instruction. Even a Google search for "best practices in second language writing instruction" provides no comparable returns, and most research into L2 writing seems focused on ESL students in higher education (especially in the US). Myles (2002) sums it up this way: "Much of the research on L2 writing has been closely dependent on L1 research" (Models of L1 and L2 writing, para. 2).

Second language research into effective practices that are relevant to the education of CIV speakers in Trinidad and Tobago falls into three broad categories: 1) recommendations for motivating L2 English writers to use English, 2) providing feedback, and 3) using computer technology. Additionally, there are some practices, such as process writing, that are applicable to both L1 and L2 English writers, and these will be treated in the section on L1 writing.

Motivation

Both Craig (2006) and Youssef (2006) have pointed to the false sense of familiarity Creole speakers can acquire with English, thus prompting them to (a) believe they already speak English, and (b) "associate the Standard code with an alien culture..." (Youssef, 2006, p. 148). This sense of familiarity is hypothesized to influence Creole speakers of school age to resist learning English. Several writers (Craig, 2006; Nero, 2000; Siegel, 2008) have recommended motivating these speakers to acquire a Standard, such as Trinidad and Tobago Standard English. Presumably, this will be reflected in their ability to produce extended English prose; thus, motivation is seen as a prerequisite for embarking on any kind of instruction.

However, empirical research in Caribbean contexts that demonstrates efficacious means of motivating CIV speakers is scarce. A search of electronic databases at UWI and UWISpace (<http://uwispace.sta.uwi.edu/dspace/>) produced no relevant hits for this topic. Thus, the idea of motivating learners has the status of a recommendation rather than a finding in the literature on L2 writing.

Providing Feedback

Providing corrective written feedback (CWF) to students has been a contentious area of L2 writing instruction. A minority of researchers

(such as Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) believe that CWF does not belong in the composition classroom because it is the domain of grammar teaching; for them, it is both ineffective and harmful.

The majority of researchers oppose Truscott's (1996) position, and have offered some empirical evidence to support CWF; however, as Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) point out, CWF is a "growing but far from conclusive body of research" (p. 194). Similarly, Ferris (2004) describes as "scarce," evidence that error feedback works. What she does argue is that students who receive feedback will be more likely to self-correct their errors than those who receive no feedback. This assumes, though, that CWF is not overwhelming to the point where the student becomes demotivated.

For those who advocate it, CWF constitutes core best practice in improving learners' production of accurate English grammar. Their evidence comes primarily from quasi-experimental research with ESL learners at high schools and universities. All experiments in which direct CWF was compared to indirect CWF and no feedback groups produced significant gains for the treatment groups (Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen, 2007).

Although there is generally inconclusive evidence of whether direct or indirect feedback produces larger, longer-lasting gains (Bitchener et al., 2008), it should be noted that some research suggests that indirect feedback is superior (Ferris & Helt, 2000 as cited in Bitchener, 2008). Ferris (2004) recommends using indirect feedback because it "engages students in cognitive problem solving as they attempt to self-edit based upon the feedback that they have received" (p. 60).

In contrast, Bitchener's (2008) own study, using three experimental and one control group, showed that low intermediate ESL students with at least eight years of English instruction made significant gains in accuracy on new pieces of writing when given direct feedback. Specifically, he found that direct CF plus written and oral metalinguistic explanation on two aspects of English grammar led to the most gains. It should be noted, though, that participants in this study were adults who were motivated to learn English, and who had gone to New Zealand for academic purposes.

Several researchers (Lee, 2008; Mok, 2011; Rollinson, 2005) recommend that ESL teachers resist the "error-focused approach to feedback" (Lee, 2008, p. 158) in which every "error" is circled or commented on. This can cause resistance, especially from low-performing students. Thus Lee endorsed Straub's (2000) position that, "it is important that teachers respond to errors according to student abilities and avoid overwhelming students with excessive error feedback" (as

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cited in Lee, 2008, p. 158). In practice, this means teachers should restrict their attention to a narrow range and small number of errors at a time (Bitchener, 2008), instead of trying to fix everything at once.

Furthermore, Lee (2008) recommends that (a) teachers select the feedback they give, and focus on “pervasive error patterns” (p. 159) as opposed to providing comprehensive feedback, which can result in illegible comments on student scripts; and (b) they explore other modes of offering feedback, such as audio feedback, computer-based feedback, and use of feedback forms.

For the purposes of the present study, what is problematic about most of the research into L2 writing is that (a) it scarcely treats with adolescent writers, and (b) the ESL participants and subjects who figure in the research are usually not Creole speakers. These two factors may constrain the extent to which L2 writing research is relevant to Caribbean educators.

L1 Writing Instruction

In contrast to L2 writing research, investigations of what constitutes effective L1 English writing instruction at secondary school have a long history dating back at least as far as Lynch and Evans’ (1963) study of textbooks used for high school English at that time (as cited in Hillocks, 2008). Since then, researchers have attempted to find out what works to improve students’ writing by focusing on a range of variables. The review that follows examines meta-analyses of experimental research and technical reports summarizing the state of the field of writing research, as well as more recent research not reflected in these publications. The effect size cited in brackets in each case is Cohen’s *d*.

What Constitutes Effective L1 Writing Instruction?

Graham and Perin’s (2007) meta-analysis of 123 experiments and quasi-experiments is the most recent of its kind. After calculating effect sizes for the studies they reviewed (which had to meet specific inclusion criteria; see Graham & Perin, pp. 447–448), the authors ranked 11 treatments based on their weighted effect sizes as follows: “strategy instruction (0.82), summarization (0.82), peer assistance (0.75), setting product goals (0.70), word processing (0.55), sentence combining (0.50), inquiry (0.32), prewriting activities (0.32), process writing approach (0.32), study of models (0.25), grammar instruction (–0.32)” (p. 445). The following paragraphs deal with the practices from this list ranked as most effective. However, “setting product goals” is not included since it is an aspect of strategy instruction. Finally, though cognitive

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apprenticeship is not a part of Graham and Perin's meta-analysis, it was reviewed here because of the interest shown in it by major scholars in writing instruction (Flower, 1993; Hayes & Flower, 1980 as cited in Duncan, 1996).

Strategy instruction

Interventions that presented strategy instruction involved explicitly showing students how to plan, revise, and edit text independently. It should be noted that though the overall effect size Graham and Perin (2007) calculated was 0.82, self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) had an average weighted effect size of 1.14, which was the highest effect size of any intervention. SRSD has been tested at all levels of the school system and found to be extremely effective (e.g., Graham & Harris, 1996; Zumbrunn & Bruning, 2013). Harris, Graham, and Mason (2006) describe it as follows:

Although the primary focus of SRSD is on teaching students strategies for successfully completing an academic task, students are also taught knowledge and self-regulatory procedures (e.g., goal setting, self-monitoring, and self instruction) needed to carry out the target strategies and better understand the task. In addition, instructional procedures for fostering aspects of motivation, such as student effort, are embedded within the model. (p. 297)

What is key about SRSD is that it is a cognitive and metacognitive approach to writing that teaches strategies as well as ways of thinking about the composition process (strategic thinking about writing), and it builds self-regulation procedures in the form of goal setting and monitoring.

Summary instruction

Summary instruction was as effective as strategy instruction. It included explicitly teaching how to summarize a text as well as "enhancing summarization by progressively fading models of a good summary" (p. 463). Graham and Perin (2007) surmised that the intervention taught students how to write more concise text. One consideration that teachers need to be aware of, though, is that if students bring significant prior knowledge of a topic to summarizing a text it can cause them to believe that they do not need to use summarization procedures they are learning (Hammann & Stevens, 2003). Hammann and Stevens discovered this when their research participants used their domain knowledge of a

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familiar topic (deserts) to produce compare-contrast essays.

Peer assistance

Peer assistance in writing refers to collaborative work between pairs or groups of students at any stage of the writing process (Hoogeveen & van Gelderen, 2013). In argument writing, for example, Andrews, Torgerson, Low, and McGuinn’s (2009) synthesis of research revealed that research by Englert et al. (1991) suggested that peer collaboration can help students to model a dialogue and this can “become internal and constitute ‘thought’” (p. 301). That is, with practice, the externalized dialogue can become internalized as a schema for directing the composing process.

More powerfully, though, peer review is a “reciprocal process” (MacArthur, 2013, p. 219), and if students are taught criteria for revising and editing, and afforded practice in giving and receiving feedback, it can develop their awareness of audience needs; increase their motivation to create meaningful texts by exposing them to the real reactions of those they interact with; increase their genre knowledge by familiarizing them with the forms and functions of different text types; and develop their metalanguage for talking about the language they are using in the composing process (Hoogeveen & van Gelderen, 2013).

Word processing

Word processing using computer software has had a positive impact on students’ writing. Graham and Perin’s (2007) meta-analysis indicated an effect size of 0.55; later, Morphy and Graham (2012) did a meta-analysis of 27 studies, which specifically investigated the effect of word processing on weaker writers and readers. They found significant positive effects for writing quality (0.52); length (0.48); development/organization of the text (0.66); mechanical correctness (0.61); motivation to write (1.42); and preferring word processing to writing by hand (0.64). The three studies that used word processing programs, which provided “text quality feedback or prompted planning, drafting, or revising,” had a significant impact on writing ($d = 1.46$). In interpreting these positive effects, it should be noted that some of the software installed on computers used in the studies were proprietary commercial software, not simply programs such as Microsoft Word. Additionally, some studies used voice recognition software, which allowed students to “dictate their papers to the machine” (Morphy & Graham, 2012, p. 649).

In L2 writing research, Stapleton and Radia (2010) demonstrated that word processing programs can increase student self-correction of written

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errors and free up teachers from dealing with spelling and grammar problems because such programs offer editorial signals (red or green lines under errors). Bradley, Lindstrom, and Rystedt's (2010) research showed the potential of wikis for fostering collaborative writing among pairs of student writers. They found that collaborating groups "produced more versions of revised text with a higher number of edits in their assignments" (p. 262). That is, there was increased operationalization of writing process principles.

Additionally, Pifarre and Fisher (2011), working with twenty-five 9- to 10-year-olds, confirmed that wikis contributed to students' understanding of composition and revision practices, leading them to engage with the composition process. They surmised, too, that the nature of the wiki increased the avenues available for peer feedback on writing and gave students "voice" because they could revise, edit, expand on other's ideas, and negotiate what they wanted to say in a collaborative space.

Cognitive apprenticeship

Finally, a key element of best practice involves use of a cognitive apprenticeship model of instruction (Dean, 2010; Kellogg, 2008). Cognitive apprenticeship, proposed by Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989), is an approach to teaching and learning in which the teacher is positioned as an expert and the learner assumes the role of apprentice. It consists of five stages: modelling, coaching and scaffolding, reflection, articulation, and exploration.

According to Englert, Mariage, and Dunsmore (2006), these stages can be demonstrated by teachers who are skilled in apprenticing their students "in the discourse and practices of skilled writers" (pp. 209–210). It requires that teachers demonstrate what is required for accomplishing a writing task (by modelling), guide students through the initial steps of doing it, then gradually release responsibility to them by scaffolding their efforts with useful strategies.

A key concept presented by Englert et al. (2006), Hyland, (2007), and the National Writing Project and Nagin (2006), as well as Dean (2010), is that writing is a sociocultural activity in which individuals compose texts for different audiences, respond to their needs, collaborate to produce different genres, and consume others' ideas. Conceptualized in this way, it is necessary to see writing instruction as deploying best practices through sociocognitive apprenticeships, and embedded within communities of practice. That is, teaching children to write is not only about having strategies, such as SRSD, or using the latest technology; it

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is also about providing a context in which writing is a meaningful activity, and students learn their craft from more knowledgeable writers.

Method

Design

This study used a multiple case design (Yin, 2014) in which data were collected over the course of two years from four English teachers pursuing their initial teacher training.

Given the stratified nature of the education system in Trinidad and Tobago and the purpose of the present research (to find out if teachers were using simplistic, unintegrated, and outdated strategies for teaching writing), the study was designed for literal followed by theoretical replication of cases (Yin, 2003).

During the first year, there was literal replication of cases: the sample comprised one teacher each from two government-assisted schools, in the expectation that their practices would be similar because of contextual similarities: similar student academic profiles, teacher access to resources, and geographical location (both were urban schools). Theoretical replication occurred in year two: one teacher each from two new sector schools was added to the study in the expectation of contrasting results. Unlike government-assisted schools, which tend to be first-choice schools attracting students who score high marks at the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination in mathematics, language arts, and a writing component, new sector schools generally serve students who score lower marks on the SEA. The expectation that guided sampling, therefore, was that teachers' instructional practices would differ due to the lower writing ability of their students.

Participants

All participants were female with an average teaching experience of seven years (minimum 2 years, maximum 9 years). Their average undergraduate GPA was 2.06, but two participants had a GPA of 3.10. Each participant was purposefully chosen to meet two sampling criteria: 1) they had taught writing for their action research project, which meant they had planned and delivered between eight and ten lessons on a writing topic; 2) they had taught at least two writing lessons during the academic year, not including the action research project (hereafter called the project). This latter requirement was included to afford a fuller analysis of teachers' pedagogy over the year of training, and not just during the intensive writing project.

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A brief profile of participants follows. All names are pseudonyms.

Government-assisted schools

Judy taught at an all-girls' Hindu school, which was built in 2001, and was approximately two miles from a major town. Student enrolment was approximately 500. In an early interview, she described her school as "results oriented," and students as deeply interested in cinema and popular music, and less so in reading.

Mala taught at an all-boys' Catholic school, which had been in existence since 1956, and had an enrolment of approximately 600 students. She described her school as "disorganised and noisy," and the boys as "active learners" who were motivated by competition and enjoyed using the latest technological gadgets.

New sector schools

Cindy's school was a Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) school built in 2000 and located on the outskirts of a busy town. However, many students came from outlying communities. Infrastructure in this school was new and well-maintained.

Grace taught at a new sector school located close to a city. Her school had undergone recent renovations, so students and staff enjoyed several air-conditioned classrooms and well-equipped computer labs, including a special room for English teaching.

Training Context

The participants in this study all took a methods course in teaching of English language arts, which presented to them research-based best practices in writing instruction. Instruction comprised lectures; class discussion of knotty issues such as effective approaches to teaching grammar for writing; modelling of instructional practices by the lecturer during lectures; and modelling of best practices by the lecturer during school field visits. The lecturer taught twice in each semester (160 minutes) for the teacher trainees featured in this study to observe. Demonstrations were followed by group discussion and opportunities for students to practise in their own schools. The methods course promoted strategic writing approaches, such as cognitive apprenticeship and SRSD. In terms of teaching grammar, the use of contrastive analysis (Craig, 2006) was recommended and demonstrated; the "policy" on corrective feedback was that it should focus on a maximum of two error types in a given instructional cycle, so as not to overwhelm learners. With respect to direct or indirect feedback, teacher trainees were introduced to the

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advantages and disadvantages, but left to experiment with which method they and their learners preferred.

Data Sources

Data for the study were collected from three sources: observation of lessons, post-lesson interviews, and lesson plans.

Observation data were collected from 21 lessons for a total of approximately 1,470 minutes of observed teaching. The researcher sat at the back of each class and made detailed typewritten notes on a laptop computer of what constituted writing instruction: what was said, what resources were used, and what tasks were set. This provided information on instructional context and teacher practices. The typewritten notes with my comments and suggestions were later edited and emailed to teacher trainees.

Lesson plans were of two “types”:

- Plans created as part of a unit of work students had to design and teach as their project
- Plans created as part of everyday teaching, which followed the teacher’s scheme of work

Though the latter were often integral parts of a sequence of lessons, yet that sequence was usually not extended enough to constitute a unit. I analysed plans to determine how the teacher had conceptualized the process of teaching whatever aspect of writing was to be explored in the lesson.

Post-lesson interviews were conducted with each participant. These focused on understanding the teacher’s intentions, rationale for the lesson, problems encountered, successes achieved, and instructional decisions made.

Data Analysis

All data were prepared so that they would be in typewritten text format. This meant transcribing interview data, and collating the notes and comments taken from classroom observations. Data were kept in separate files to facilitate later triangulation through data convergence (Yin, 2014).

Data collected during the literal replication phase of the study were subjected to five rounds of analysis:

1. Round one consisted of reading through the data several times to get a sense of the major issues.

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2. Round two involved assigning short phrases to significant chunks of text and writing memos that interpreted their meaning.
3. In round three, the texts and coded phrases were assembled into a new document and memos were synthesized and elaborated upon, with the texts serving as “evidence” to support the memos and coded phrases.
4. Round four involved diagramming the coded phrases and collapsing them, where possible, into superordinate code (e.g., “teacher modelling,” “technology telling,” and “giving a bus tour.”
5. Round five triangulated the data by looking for convergent evidence since the data came from multiple sources (Yin, 2014). This meant interpreting the findings of each data source and comparing findings across sources.

This entire process was repeated for data collected in the theoretical replication phase. Following this, I searched for commonalities (recurring coded phrases and memos) across the two phases of the research. It is these commonalities that are presented as findings in the next section. The research participants are called teacher trainees.

Findings

Overview

This study was undertaken to answer the following research question, “To what extent is it true that teachers (enrolled in the Dip.Ed.) ‘...use rather simplistic, unintegrated and outdated strategies for teaching writing’ (Watts, 1993, p. 68)?”

Both phases of the study (literal and theoretical replication) established strong support for Watts’ claim when observations were conducted during the initial stages of teacher trainees’ practice. However, the later stages, especially teaching during the project, revealed significant transformation in practice, which was marked by teacher trainees’ success in implementing some research-based best practices in writing instruction.

One participant, Judy, is presented as both a non-example of problems teacher trainees experienced initially as well as an example of informed use of cognitive apprenticeship, since she so clearly “disproves” Watts’ (1993) claim.

Presentation of Data

Initial practice

All teachers—regardless of school type—initially favoured two major practices in teaching writing: 1) telling; and 2) providing sweeping overviews, which could be characterized as “simplistic, unintegrated and outdated.”

Telling. Telling refers to two inter-related practices: 1) lecturing to students in a way that presented declarative knowledge and little or no procedural knowledge, and 2) telling with technology. In each case, the teacher lectured to students on a topic (much as the teachers may have experienced university lectures) and students’ role was to make notes or answer questions, following which they attempted to work on a task requiring procedural knowledge that had not been taught to them.

Telling declarative knowledge. Declarative knowledge is “knowledge of,” such as knowing what is a summary, what are the elements of a story, and what is descriptive writing as a genre. Procedural knowledge is “knowledge of how to” write a summary, how to combine the elements of a story to create an interesting narrative, and how to produce a vivid description. Initially, teachers seemed to assume that telling students about a generic element (e.g., plot in narrative, or thesis statement in exposition) would automatically translate into students’ ability to execute a skill, such as write a story or a letter.

For example, Mala presented a lesson on friendly letters to a Form 1 class (11- to 12-year-olds). In it, she engaged students in a discussion of why a particular rhetorical situation would require a letter of invitation; following this, she distributed an example of a model letter she had written, drew a three-column table on the board with the headings “format,” “tone,” “content,” and explored features of the pre-written letter that fell into these categories. She ended instruction by summarizing for students what was the content of the letter. Following this, Mala directed the class to write a letter inviting the Member of Parliament for the area in which the school was situated to attend a school function. However, many students could not complete the task within the 30 minutes allocated.

In the post-lesson interview, Mala explained:

Every year students come to us and we think they should know letter writing, you know? Because it’s on the primary school syllabus. But, sometimes they swear they never did it before, and

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some of them who do remember how to start a letter can't remember what goes into it, so...I have to teach them everything.

My written feedback on the lesson was as follows:

Here is a problem: students usually have composition problems when writing social letters. What you presented was the example of a letter and you went through its features. How, though, did the writer generate this content? The analysis was important and well done but needs to be supported with brainstorming and demonstration on the board. This should have been step 8 because you must show how to write the letter. Your lesson presented declarative knowledge (features of the letter) but the task you required the class to work on asked them to demonstrate procedural knowledge (creating a letter) without demonstrating the procedure for doing so.

In effect, as Watts (1993) had complained, Mala did not engage students with the deep purpose of the genre and move beyond noticing surface features, yet she expected them to produce proficient examples of it.

Telling with technology. Telling with technology meant that teachers used slide shows (Microsoft PowerPoint presentations) as aids to telling and transmitting information, so that the slide content merely substituted for teacher talk or notes written on a white board.

When teachers told with technology, a typical instructional sequence was as follows: the teacher activated students' background knowledge, explained the purpose of the lesson, engaged in several Initiate Respond Feedback turns with students, then presented a slide show using slides replete with notes, definitions, and procedures for getting something done. The teacher provided an explanation of the content on the slides, asked questions, and allowed students to take notes. Usually, this was followed by pair or group work based on the content of the presentation, and the lesson ended with student presentations. An example of a lesson on summary writing by Grace illustrates this pattern. The transcript starts approximately four minutes into the lesson, and the events captured are in sequential order:

Teacher: *I want you to be able to read and understand, develop critical thinking skills, think outside the box, say what something means. We already know how to extract ideas. Pull out ideas. Extract is to pull out, yes?*

Teacher shows slide titled, "How to write a summary." The slides instruct how to do a summary:

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- Read the material and get main idea
- Try to understand...
- Underline....

Teacher: *One of the things you ask yourself is, ‘What goes into the summary?’ We have four Ws. Mike, tell us what they are.*

Student recalls the four W’s: Who, what, why, where?

Teacher presents a supporting slide: ‘Ask who, what, where, why’?

Teacher: *These as key words. But how do you know what key points are? Ask these questions. (points to the slide.)*

Teacher: *Ask yourself the following, ‘What is the main reason for the passage? Out of everything the writer said, what seems really important? Look for [gives list of text features].’*

Shows slide titled, “How to write a summary,” which contains the following information: “delete minor and redundant details, combine similar details into categories and provide a label, select main idea sentences when the author provides one, or invent main idea sentences when the author is not explicit.”

In this example, there is no engagement of students, and the slides simply transmit a welter of information about the topic. The principal benefit Grace reaps using this approach is saving time that would normally be spent writing the information on the board.

Another point to note is that Grace attempts to teach summary writing through a sweeping overview. That is, she presents all the information about the topic in one block or instructional sequence, which is a characteristic of transmissive teaching (Brann, Edwards, & Myers, 2005).

Providing sweeping overviews. The purpose of an overview is to provide declarative knowledge, which can also function as an advance organizer, but some teachers did not differentiate between an overview of a narrow element or feature, such as characterization in story writing, and doing an overview of the entire topic. They then seemed to expect that this bird’s eye view of the whole topic was adequate preparation for students to actually write competently in a genre. For example, approximately five weeks after her lesson on letter writing described previously, Mala said in a post-lesson interview: “*I wanted to teach*

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students how to write an effective essay (story) because they always writing really short th... um...like summaries,” but she had presented an entire lesson on elements of story writing, with graphics showing types of conflict and plot of a story (with a story mountain graphic), then immediately asked students to work in small groups to write the exposition for a story.

Similarly, Cindy explained, *“It’s important for students to know how to, you know, describe people and places, descriptive writing, ok? This is the big topic for three’s [14-year-olds] this term, so in this lesson I showed them how to write a description.”* The lesson comprised almost 30 minutes of an overview lecture—via a slideshow—on descriptive, narrative, and expository writing (without engaging students in explicit comparison and contrast of the genres), with examples of each and discussion of their salient features. In the remaining 10 minutes, students were given a prompt, “Think about a person you admire a lot, and write a one paragraph description of him/her.” Since there was insufficient time to complete the task, students were told to work on it at home. It is important to note here that Cindy said she *“showed”* students *“how to write a description”* when in actuality she delivered a lecture that provided declarative knowledge. This approach is quite likely what Watts (1993) characterized as “simplistic, unintegrated and outdated” teaching.

A non-example. Unlike the other teacher trainees, Judy’s first observed writing lesson was actually the second supervised lesson she taught. Her first lesson focused on teaching students to analyse character in *Wuthering Heights*, and she had received verbal and written feedback on it. Thus, when she taught the lesson on writing her practice had already been “primed,” as it were, by the experiences of the first clinical practice. The pedagogical problem in her lesson on writing, she related afterwards, was that students created predictable, boring stories that had little reader interest:

They come from primary school after writing the SEA and I feel they just learn off these plots and phrases, so everybody’s writing about the same thing. There’s no creativity, and it gets really boring to mark after a while.

Her solution was to lead students through a brainstorming process in response to a visual stimulus (a picture of a sleeping dog curled up on a rug) then prompt them to use descriptive details to create a memorable character.

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At the end of the brainstorming exercise, in which students' ideas were written on the board and they discussed in some detail what they wanted to happen in the story, Judy read the professionally written story from which the picture had been taken. Afterwards, she engaged students in comparing and contrasting what that author had done to achieve reader interest versus what they (students) had produced. The strength of her lesson was in its intention to produce "noticing" (Schmidt, 1990) and explicit awareness in students of what is engaging writing. More pointedly, her students were actively engaged in comparing, contrasting, describing, and reflecting where Mala's, Cindy's, and Grace's students had been passive listeners.

The examples presented so far, except for the case of Judy, showed teacher trainees teaching writing in the "simplistic, unintegrated and outdated" manner Watts (1993) had described. The section that follows presents evidence to show that a majority of them acquired more sophisticated and effective pedagogical approaches for teaching writing because they aimed for student engagement and student self-regulation in the composing process.

Informed practice

The measure of teachers' pedagogical improvement during the year of their training was their adoption of research-based best practices. Although, as was to be expected, no one demonstrated adoption of all best practices in such a short time, the following were observed in the majority of the sample: 1) Use of cognitive apprenticeship, 2) Use of technology for more than lecturing, and 3) Experimentation with process writing.

Cognitive apprenticeship. Cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989) requires teachers to model, scaffold, and guide learners through the process of composing in a genre before gradually releasing them to independent practice. The version of the model teacher trainees used was gradual release of responsibility (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Most teachers experimented and gained proficiency with it, especially after they used the project as a vehicle for extended practice with the approach. Though they worked in very different contexts, Grace and Judy experienced success using cognitive apprenticeship.

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Grace

For her project, Grace combined SRSD and cognitive apprenticeship to address the problems her students were experiencing with narrative writing, which she described as follows:

Students are able to informally narrate a story orally among themselves and give details on a character but when challenged to do the same in the written form, find difficulty in doing so. Although they are taught the fundamentals of character development, they seem to focus more on one event in a story and include a character without much thought or skill.

Grace operationalized cognitive apprenticeship in her project through a five-stage process:

- In stage one, she developed students' background knowledge and assessed pre skills.
- In stage two, she discussed the use of the WWW, W=2, H=2 graphic organizer and students memorized it.
- In stage three, she modelled and used the think aloud teaching strategy.
- In stage four she scaffolded student efforts in small groups to use the mnemonic.
- In stage five, she offered opportunities for independent performance, where students practised self-questioning and used checklists to guide their writing.

Grace tried assigning individual writing for homework in an effort to save classroom instructional time; however, only three students consistently did this. The remainder made excuses, so she was forced to schedule independent writing during class time when she could supervise it and urge students on.

The following is an extended excerpt from my field notes describing how Grace showed students to use the strategy through think aloud and modelling:

I picked my idea: I said 'students should not go for recess'. I organised it on my paper with my points [in the exam you can write these on the exam paper]. We will examine now how we will explain it.

That's the 1st part of the strategy. While we are POWing we will use the strategy TREE and it looks something like this: places diagram of a tree on the board. TREE stands for three things: T for

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topic sentence, R for reason, E for explain, another E for ending or wrap up. This is what you will be using all the time. When they say “Convince and persuade anybody,” use this. It’s a reminder; a trick to help you remember. ...I will show you how I will put ‘my students will not go for recess’ into the TREE. Give me a topic sentence. I can say something like, “Students should not be allowed to go for recess.” That is my topic sentence. What am I doing next? I’m going to my reasons. We have a few reasons. Lists them. These are our reasons here why we think...you with me? Right.

The rest of the class was spent working out how to convert the idea (not permitting students to have recess) into a paragraph. Grace demonstrated, then enlisted student assistance in the composition task. She modelled topic sentence generation and chaining of sentences within a paragraph whilst thinking out loud for students to understand her thought process. Following this, students volunteered sentences that logically built up the argument of the paragraph. The role Grace adopted was that of proficient writer apprenticing novices and showing them how to write by actually demonstrating how to do it on the board. This was significantly different from her previous practice of simply telling with technology because it gave her students cognitive tools for eventually working independently.

Judy

Judy’s project addressed her students’ needs for instruction in writing essays for Literatures in English (LiE) at the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) because, she said, “*it has been my experience that students’ essays for CAPE LiE become a replication of a response to an English B question at the CSEC.*” She pointed specifically to skills required in interpretation, illustration, and evaluation, which she felt had contributed to under-performance in LiE because the English B syllabus and examination did not emphasize these skills.

Instead of merely telling students about effective essay writing, Judy devised her project so that she apprenticed her sixth form students into literary scholarship. She modelled how to create a socio-historical background in an essay, and how to use concept maps to assess the impact of authorial/historical background. Her stimulus texts were *Wuthering Heights* (Bronte, 1847; 1996) and *Brown Girls Brown Stones* (Marshall, 1959; 2009).

Scaffolding/providing guided practice comprised the following: pairing students, and enlisting their help to identify what information was relevant for creating socio-historical background; inserting

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authorial/historical information through either parallel or integrated construction; deconstructing propositions; creating and using cluster maps for defining main ideas, and drafting essays.

The collaborative learning phase overlapped with the guided practice phase, perhaps because students learned very quickly and were able to complete their maps and devote more time to addressing a significant problem that they faced: How to translate the ideas from the map into actual paragraphs. Since the class was small, Judy responded by helping the pairs to construct opening paragraphs based on their maps. Finally, she implemented the independent practice phase by having students write responses to examination type questions at home since she did not face the same problem Grace did.

Technology use. Informed use of technology meant using a computer for two major purposes: 1) displaying PowerPoint presentations to provide vicarious experience and supplement students' prior knowledge of a topic; and 2) using YouTube videos, film clips, and cartoons as text. With respect to the former, for example, Cindy wanted students to write about the injustices Blacks had endured in the United States, which are captured in the poems *Dreamin' Black Boy* (Berry, 1988) and *Epitaph* (Scott, 1973), so she created a slide show with images showing the KKK, segregated classrooms and public spaces, chained Africans being taken into slavery, and other visual artifacts. This she used for generating a discussion about racism and its impact on an entire race. Following that, Cindy led students in writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper presenting the plight of the narrator in Berry's (1998) poem. In justifying this approach to writing instruction she said:

The comments that were made for the English B syllabus um..um..questions that they did, I think it was last year, Epitaph and lynching were compared, right? And the examiners were saying a lot of the students did not have even background information as to the history of this particular poem. If a student was to read this poem by himself he would not understand it. So I chose to build the historical background so they would understand why 'epitaph'. Why choose the word 'epitaph'. Even while I was doing this poem, I was trying to put myself in their position and build knowledge for myself because you can't write about the poem if you don't really know the background.

In effect, what Cindy did was to disrupt the normal writing instruction practices in her class, which had depended on lecturing with PowerPoint presentations, giving notes, and expecting that the broad overview would

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somehow trickle down into concrete skills for writing. What was also interesting was that Cindy recognized that she could integrate letter writing as a means for channelling her students’ negative sentiments about the events in the poem.

With respect to use of video clips from movies and cartoons, Mala experimented with these to encourage her students to infuse their stories with mood and tone, especially as it related to character development and interpersonal conflict. For example, in one lesson she set out to teach intra-personal conflict using primarily visual tools:

1. She used slides of persons exhibiting sadness and generated vocabulary such as *glum*, *crestfallen*, and *crushed*.
2. She showed an excerpt from the TV sitcom, *Seinfeld*, in which the character, George, describes his failures in life and decides to reverse all his usual responses to things. This instructional step produced the words *morose*, *regretful*, *frustrated*, *confused*, and *upset*.
3. Mala generated discussion about the characters’ emotions and led the class in writing a description of what they had viewed in the slides as well as the video clip, using the vocabulary they generated.

Commenting on her success in using these technological tools, she analysed it as follows:

The students’ increase in description of feelings may be attributed to the analysis of characters’ feelings during the development of the conflicts in stories and clips. I observed that during these classes students would show a lot of zeal because they were viewing clips that they were able to relate to what was being shown. Therefore they were always aware of characters’ moods and feelings.

This was a significant shift in practice for her from “telling” and providing “sweeping overviews,” and it relied on engaging students by having them use low-frequency words already in their mental lexicon (but which they did not usually employ), and modelling for them how to write the description.

Some teachers at new sector schools had more difficulty using technological tools because AV equipment was frequently broken or unavailable, even when they brought content created on their home computers. Though teachers at government-assisted schools tended to have working facilities, access was frequently an issue.

Process writing

Another way all teachers avoided instructional practices that were “simplistic, unintegrated and outdated” was by teaching process writing for their projects. However, the major implementation issue related to instructional time required for the middle steps of writing and revising. Although teachers’ strategies across schools were similar (incorporating gradual release of responsibility and process writing), teachers at new sector schools spent significantly more time assisting students with the revision stage. On average, they devoted three sessions (210 minutes) of instructional time to this, compared to their counterparts in the assisted schools who spent 35–40 minutes (one class).

Where teachers’ practice needed more polishing, too, was in providing corrective feedback. They said they favoured the multiple draft approach to writing. However, classroom observation, as well as analysis of student work appended to the projects, indicated that “multiple” really meant two drafts: there was an initial draft which the teacher responded to in detail (focusing on punctuation, grammar, and spelling, especially in new sector schools), following which students handed in a final corrected version. Teachers favoured direct feedback and none of them used the conventions of indirect feedback.

Discussion

This study investigated Watts’ (1993) claim that English teachers “continue to use rather simplistic, unintegrated and outdated strategies for teaching writing” (p. 68). Using a purposive sample of Dip.Ed. teacher trainees, the present study confirmed Watts’ claim, but only for some teachers’ initial practices.

Given the fact that teachers had been teaching writing for some time (at least for two years in the case of the least experienced teacher), and were probably presenting their best practice as their first lesson, it may be fair to assume that those lessons represented their conception of how to teach writing. In effect, what happened after verbal and written feedback from the tutor was that teachers attempted to change their practice to align it with what the training programme presented as best practices. That is, once they received feedback and understood the need for apprenticing their adolescent writers they attempted to practise it. If this is so, then it means that their changed practice represented a change in conception of what it meant to teach writing. One might then speculate that the “simplistic, unintegrated and outdated” approaches they used initially reflected the state of their knowledge at that time. That is, they

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initially conceptualized writing instruction as lecturing or telling until they saw other ways demonstrated to them.

It is also possible, though, that teachers adopted the new strategies merely for the tutor's benefit because they would eventually be graded on their adoption of best practices, and did not really change their conceptions. However, it was not possible to test this possibility.

In analysing the evidence from this study and comparing it to Watts' (1993) study, a key element of timing arises. Though Watts made her claim about teachers' unsophisticated pedagogy, she did not specify the point in the training period her assessment of them referred to. This is an important consideration when evaluating teachers because of the nature of the training programme: it is a postgraduate diploma offering initial teacher training for persons who are already teachers. This means that even though trainees have classroom experience it is quite likely that their pedagogical skills and approaches have been strongly influenced by apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). That is, they teach in the way they were taught. Consequently, if Watts' comments applied to teacher trainees before they had had adequate opportunities to assimilate and experiment with what, at that time, were considered best practices, then her categorization of their teaching would have been an accurate one. However, the categorization would have also been an incomplete one.

If it is that Watts' sample exited the training programme exhibiting the lack of skills she described, then several possibilities present themselves:

1. Teacher trainees chose not to practise what was taught in the training programme, which makes it an effectiveness of training issue.
2. Writing pedagogy was not taught or explored during the period, in which case Watts' claim was unfair since she expected teachers to demonstrate what had not been taught.
3. Writing pedagogy was taught, but it failed to change teacher trainees' conceptions of what it means to teach writing.
4. Writing pedagogy was taught, but teacher trainees failed to acquire mastery of the principles.

Any of these possibilities may be true; however, Watts' (1983) article is silent on the details.

The design of the present study assumed that differences in school contexts would be reflected in differences in pedagogical practice, given the significant differences in learner profile at the schools sampled. Surprisingly, however, there were no significant differences in teachers' initial practices, but those who practised at new sector schools tended to

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have fewer technological tools. There was also low variability in teachers' informed practices. If one explains the initial practices in terms of apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), a possible reason for the lack of differences in informed practice may be the extended modelling provided by the tutor. Theoretically, this could have provided the cognitive blueprint teachers needed for enacting what the training programme was recommending because they had live demonstrations of what was presented in the methods course (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989). What such an explanation cannot explore in this paper, though, is what effect or impact instruction had upon adolescent students in the different contexts.

Finally, and significant for its omission, was the issue of teaching of grammar. One would have expected contrastive analysis lessons to be taught in new sector schools because the students there have less control of Standard English; however, none of the lessons at any school dealt with this aspect of writing instruction.

Implication for Teacher Training

Teacher trainees benefit from training. If one measures their growth unidimensionally in terms of the degree to which they adopt research-based best practices, then the evidence suggests that they can grow during the year of training. As indicated earlier, it would probably be impossible for teacher trainees to adopt all best practices in writing instruction, so teacher educators need to prioritize which best practices are key to improving student writing in schools, and model these for teacher trainees to emulate.

The findings showed that, initially, teacher trainees tended to tell rather than show how to write, and they relied on broad overviews of topics despite plenary discussion of the issues and lecturer modelling. This suggests that teacher educators must anticipate teacher trainees' initial moves and provide teaching tasks for them to work through that "phase" in their development.

In this respect, a major challenge facing teacher trainers is the need to target teacher trainees' conceptions of what constitutes best practices, and lead them to understand the need for teaching their students strategic thinking about composition.

Limitations

Although the evidence presented here suggests that English teacher trainees' writing pedagogy was better than what Watts (1993) had described, one must bear in mind that teachers sampled in this study

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were “on show” and the main audience was a tutor whose judgement could have decided their success on the training programme. Thus, there is no guarantee that, once they graduated, they did not revert to teaching writing as they did prior to training. Finally, this study focused only on investigating Watts’ claims; therefore, it made no attempt to assess the effect of teachers’ practices on students’ writing. That is, it looked at what they did and how it was done, not on its impact.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the extent to which Watts’ (1993) claim that teacher trainees’ writing instruction practices “continue to be simplistic, unintegrated and outdated” is relevant today. The data presented here provide evidence that that criticism may be too harsh. Once teacher trainees conceptualized writing instruction as teaching of strategic thinking, and realized that their “apprentices” needed to see a more proficient writer engaged in composition, they consistently explored selected best practices in writing instruction. That is, they consciously moved away from the kinds of superficial, teacher-centred practices Watts had criticized. This suggests that at least some adolescents are receiving the kind of instruction required for “participation in civic life and in the global economy” (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 3). This may be indicative of the transformative effect of teacher education.

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