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Third- to Fifth-Grade Teachers' Training and Their Confidence in Teaching Writing

Lysette Dorothy Cohen
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Lysette Cohen

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Review Committee
Dr. Glenn Penny, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Katherine Garlough, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2023

Abstract

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by

Lysette Cohen

MA, Southern New Hampshire University, 2018

MEd, Northern Arizona University, 2016

BA, Ottawa University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Evaluation

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Abstract

Third- to fifth-grade teachers are struggling to teach writing, and research had not
addressed how their training to teach writing or their confidence in their ability to use
effective strategies to teach writing influences their teaching. The purpose of this basic
qualitative study was to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing
instruction and their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing.
The conceptual framework was Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and Shulman's theory
of pedagogical content knowledge. Participants included nine third- to fifth-grade
teachers who had experience teaching writing. Data were collected through
semistructured interviews. A priori and open coding was used to generate themes. Next,
axial coding was used to identify categories and themes. Findings indicated that
participants used their pedagogical content knowledge to differentiate their teaching
strategies in teaching writing. Findings also indicated that the longer a teacher taught, the
more confident they felt in teaching writing. Finally, the findings indicated that the
teachers felt that they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their teacher
preparation programs, received professional development once in the classroom, and
desired more training to teach writing. The results provided insights into how training and
confidence play a role in developing effective teaching practices. Results could be used
by administrators and professional development coordinators to better support teachers in
teaching the process of writing.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, mom, and niece. Grandma, your encouragement and love were the driving force behind my journey. I wish more than anything that you could be here to read this dedication. Mom, your guidance, mentorship, and support have inspired me to reach for the stars. Sydney, you are the future. I am so humbled and grateful to be a part of your journey.

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To all these remarkable individuals, thank you for being part of my journey and for contributing to my growth and success. Your support means the world to me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Writing skills play a pivotal role in a student's emotional growth, critical reasoning development, and overall academic performance (Graham, 2021). Moreover, writing serves as a powerful tool of empowerment, enabling effective communication and paving the way for academic and career success (Sanders et al., 2020). A strong foundation in writing can affect future achievements, enhancing students' communication abilities (Graham, 2021).

Despite the importance of writing skills, many elementary teachers lack adequate preparation to teach writing. Studies have shown that only one fourth of teacher preparation programs offer writing pedagogy methods instruction (Sanders et al., 2020). Furthermore, professional development (PD) opportunities for teachers often prioritize reading instruction, leaving writing education neglected (Sanders et al., 2020). This lack of training and experience can result in a deficiency in teacher confidence to teach writing effectively. The research problem addressed in the current study was the struggle faced by third- to fifth-grade teachers in teaching writing, and how their training in writing instruction and their confidence in using effective strategies influence their teaching. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their perceptions of confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing.

Through in-depth interviews with third- to fifth-grade teachers, I aimed to gain insights into their experiences, training, and perceived confidence in teaching writing. Understanding these aspects may inform preservice teaching programs, PD initiatives,

and overall support for teachers in their writing instruction efforts. Findings may provide valuable contributions to the field by revealing the challenges faced by teachers in teaching writing and the significance of teacher confidence in effective writing instruction. The insights gained from this study may be used to better support teachers, thereby benefiting students' learning experiences in writing. In this chapter, I provide a background of the study, address the problem and purpose of this study, and establish a conceptual framework. I also outline the nature of the study, define relevant terms, and discuss assumptions and significance.

Background

Early writing skills support students' emotional growth, critical reasoning skills, and school performance (Graham, 2021). Writing is also a tool of empowerment that enables effective communication and academic and career success (Sanders et al., 2020). A strong foundation in writing can be an indicator of future success because it enhances communication skills (Graham, 2021). Writing skills are especially important to late elementary students. Third to fifth grade is an important developmental stage in elementary writing in which students shift from learning to compose sentences to learning to create paragraphs and essays. By middle school, students need to "without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information" (National Governors Association, 2010, p. 7). Writing is not an innate skill and must be taught to students (Graham, 2021; Pendergast, 2020).

Many elementary teachers are not adequately prepared to teach writing. Studies have shown that only one fourth of teacher preparation programs offer writing pedagogy methods instruction (Sanders et al., 2020). Most PD facilitators focus on reading; however, teachers need to teach writing (Sanders et al., 2020). This lack of experience and training can create areas of need in teacher confidence in their ability to teach writing.

Teachers need to possess a high level of confidence in what they are teaching. Researchers have noted that when teachers have higher confidence levels, their students are more successful (Holzberger et al., 2013). Also, teachers who foster more student engagement are more successful in the classroom (Battersby & Verdi, 2015). Self-efficacy is one lens for understanding teacher confidence and ability. Marschall and Watson (2022) noted that self-efficacy is how an individual perceives their ability to accomplish a task. Researchers suggested that one way individuals strengthen self-efficacy is through practice an experience (Clark & Andreasen, 2021). Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is an important model for increasing teachers' self-efficacy. Shulman (1986) noted that teachers need to be confident in their understanding of content and their ability to teach content. Both self-efficacy and PCK may be important for teachers in teaching writing.

Problem Statement

Writing is a complex and challenging skill to teach. When enough time is devoted to teaching writing, students develop stronger writing skills (Graham, 2021). However, third- to fifth-grade teachers may struggle to teach writing, and it was unknown how their

training in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing influence their teaching. Evidence for the problem was provided in a grounded theory study of writing teachers by Sanders et al. (2020), who found that teachers in many classrooms struggled to teach writing and instead relied on fill-in-the-blank and one-sentence answers rather than composition assignments. Additionally, a study of elementary teachers showed that teachers do not have the writing experience and knowledge needed to teach writing (Adoniou, 2015). Contributing to the problem is the fact that only 25% of teachers receive training to teach writing in teacher preparation programs (Sanders et al., 2020). Further, ongoing teacher training and PD often do not provide teachers with the skills they need to teach writing, leaving teachers with insufficient pedagogical skills (Deane, 2018). The lack of teacher instruction for writing skills can negatively influence teacher confidence and effectiveness (Saine & West, 2017).

Researchers have suggested that teacher confidence in their ability to teach writing is associated with positive results in student outcomes (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020; Creely et al., 2021; Hodges et al., 2021). Studies have also shown that elementary teacher confidence in their ability to teach may indicate how effectively they perform (Raymond-West & Rangel, 2020; Saine & West, 2017). Additionally, Lazarides et al. (2021) found a positive correlation between elementary teacher confidence and student interest. The research suggested the potential importance of elementary teacher confidence and the effect it may have on student learning. Furthermore, this research indicated that

elementary teacher confidence has a positive effect on student achievement and motivation.

Confidence is an important aspect of teaching. Although there was considerable research on teacher confidence due to its correlation with educational and classroom outcomes, there was a gap in the research regarding third- to fifth-grade teacher training in teaching writing and teachers' confidence in their ability to teach writing (see Brinkmann, 2019; Hodges et al., 2019; Raymond-West & Rangel, 2020). Additionally, researchers have called for research into teacher perceptions of self-efficacy (Clark & Andreasen, 2021; Marschall & Watson, 2022).

Purpose

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing. Shulman (1986) suggested that to be effective, teachers must possess a strong content knowledge combined with best practices in assisting students to learn in that content area. One reason to explore third- to fifth-grade teacher training and teachers' confidence in teaching writing was the lack of research concerning writing pedagogy classes and PD in writing pedagogy available to practicing teachers (see Sanders et al., 2020). Exploring how third- to fifth-grade teachers perceive their abilities to deliver strong writing instruction was an opportunity to learn from this teaching cohort.

Research Questions

The research questions were used to guide the exploration of third- to fifth-grade teacher training and teachers' confidence in their ability to teach writing. The research questions were broad enough to address teachers' experiences, educational backgrounds, and training. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing?

2. What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing?

3. How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

Conceptual Framework

Teacher confidence is important in the delivery of instruction. Confidence affects an individual's choice of activities and how successful they are in facing challenges (Branden, 1995; Capp, 2020; Nolan & Molla, 2017). Analyzing this confidence can be done through the lens of self-efficacy. The concepts that grounded the current study included Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Shulman's (1986) PCK model. In the theory of self-efficacy, Bandura explained an individual's beliefs and perception of their ability to complete a task. Shulman suggested that knowledge of how to teach is as important as knowledge of the subject matter taught.

A teacher's belief that a particular instructional strategy is effective does not mean that they feel confident implementing it (Bandura, 1977). Bandura explained that

individuals who possess high self-efficacy deal with failure more easily and are more able to persevere. This theory supports the idea that in teaching writing, teachers with high self-efficacy are less likely to give up and will adapt and learn the skills needed.

Shulman (1986) posited that teachers need to have deep content knowledge partnered with an understanding of how to help students learn. This combination of knowledge of subject matter and the understanding of teaching practices is the foundation of Shulman's PCK model and supports student achievement and success (Adoniou, 2015). By combining these concepts, teachers can better support students in understanding the material.

I used these concepts to guide the exploration of third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. Gaining insight through data collection and analysis into the complexities of teacher beliefs could enhance understanding to better support teacher effectiveness. These concepts were appropriate filters for analysis to organize the perceptions of third- to fifth-grade teachers.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a basic qualitative study to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. Basic qualitative research is a generic form that involves collecting and analyzing nonnumerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences (Katula, 2003). Qualitative research methods can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Ratvich & Carl, 2021). Additionally, qualitative research is a platform for

researchers to understand individuals' lived experiences in real-life settings and produce findings that come from real-world situations and social phenomena (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Researchers facilitate this understanding by providing findings about people's lives and reflecting on how people make meaningful behaviors, experiences, and feelings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In the current study, qualitative data collected through participant interviews, observation notes, log notes, and student writing samples were analyzed to identify recurring themes that would not have been found through quantitative methods.

To address the research questions in this basic qualitative study, I collected data through semistructured interviews with third- to fifth-grade teachers who teach writing in the United States (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For my planned research design, I sought to recruit 10–12 third- to fifth-grade teacher participants for individual interviews. This method of gathering data was appropriate for a basic qualitative study, and it provided deeper insight into the experiences of these teachers and a fuller understanding of this nationwide phenomenon (see Creely et al., 2021; Greco et al., 2018).

Definitions

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK): What teachers know about teaching and what they know about what they teach (Shulman, 1986).

Perception: The way an individual understands or interprets something (Speed, 2019).

Professional development (PD): The process of continuous learning and skill enhancement that individuals undertake to improve their knowledge and abilities within their profession or occupation (Qoura & Zahran, 2018).

Self-efficacy: An individual's judgment about how they perform a duty given their experience, skills, and belief in themselves (Bandura, 1977).

Social cognitive theory: The framework that learning occurs in a social context and that much of what a student learns increases through observation (Bandura, 1977).

Teacher preparation program (TPP): A college education program that follows state guidelines in preparing a student to become a licensed early education, elementary, or secondary teacher (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019).

Teachers' self-efficacy: A teacher's belief regarding how they handle tasks, responsibilities, and challenges concerning their profession (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Wyatt, 2013).

Teacher's writing self-efficacy: A teacher's belief in their ability to teach writing (Wyatt, 2013).

Writing self-efficacy: Perceptions of one's writing abilities and skills needed to perform writing tasks (Pajares, 1993).

Assumptions

Assumptions are research claims that are supposed but not proven (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Every research design has fundamental assumptions. One assumptions of the current study was that I bracketed my researcher bias. To bolster the credibility of the study, I made sure all findings indicated only the participants' views and perceptions.

Another assumption was that teachers struggling to teach writing would be willing to discuss their experiences teaching writing. I also assumed that the participants would answer interview questions honestly and to the best of their ability. This assumption was important because the participants' views were the focus of this study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this basic qualitative study was the views and perceptions of elementary teachers for third to fifth grade who teach writing. The scope included all full-time educators who were currently teaching or had taught third- to fifth-grade writing. This qualitative study included nine elementary general education teachers who were teaching or who had taught language arts. I conducted in-depth semistructured interviews for data collection. I also transcribed the recordings and coded the data.

Delimitations of my study included teachers in other grades. These teachers were not included in this study because my focus was third- to fifth-grade teachers' experiences and training to teach writing. Potential challenges for this study included difficulty in recruiting participants for interviews. Katula (2003) noted that although a sufficient sample size is necessary for a study, there can be issues with recruitment such as the eligibility of participants and poor retention. Another challenge was maintaining objectivity throughout the data collection and analysis process. I sought to maintain complete objectivity as the researcher. Because I am a writer and a writing teacher, I needed to be aware of my bias so I could objectively represent the perceptions of others.

Significance

This study has the potential to make an original contribution to the identified gap in the literature by exploring third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. The results of this study may lead to social change through its insights into how confidence plays a part in effective teaching practices for third- to fifth-grade writing instruction. Insights into teacher training in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to teach writing could be used by teachers, administrators, and PD coordinators to better support teachers and, by extension, better support students in learning the process of writing.

Summary

A strong foundation in writing can be an indicator of future success because this foundation enhances communication skills (Graham, 2021). The research problem that was addressed in the current study was that third- to fifth-grade teachers are struggling to teach writing, and it was unknown how their training in writing instruction or their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing influences their teaching. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing. The research questions explored in this study were the following: (a) What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing? (b) What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing? (c) How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability

to use effective strategies to teach writing? Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and

Shulman's (1986) theory of PCK were used to construct the conceptual framework.

Understanding third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their

confidence and ability to teach writing could inform preservice teaching programs and

practicing teacher PD and training. To explore these experiences, I interviewed nine

third- to fifth-grade teachers. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the conceptual

framework and a review of relevant literature on the central principles addressed in the

current study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the training of third- to fifth-grade teachers in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. I explored the problem of the lack of research on third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. Recent research suggested that there is a lack of writing instruction courses available during preservice teacher preparation programs (Sanders et al., 2020). This is important because a lack of preparation for writing instruction in the classroom is affecting teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach writing, which leads to a lack of effective writing instruction (Hodges et al., 2019; Sanders et al., 2020).

I begin Chapter 2 with a description of the literature search strategy and provide an overview of the conceptual framework, which was centered on self-efficacy regarding the training teachers had in their TPPs and additional PD. Next is a comprehensive review of the recent research that supported the research questions for the study, as well as a synthesis of studies on the history of writing, writing curriculum in third- to fifth-grade classrooms, TPPs, teacher training, PD, PCK, and teachers' self-efficacy in writing instruction. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points and a transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

For this literature search, I used the Walden University Library databases of EBSCO, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and Science Direct to obtain peer-reviewed articles concerning the phenomenon being studied. These databases and search engines contained

peer-reviewed literature related to TPPs, teachers' self-efficacy, and third- to fifth-grade writing instruction. The search process involved using combinations of keywords to find articles within the selected databases. The keywords used in my search included the following terms: *self-efficacy*, *teachers' self-efficacy*, *teacher perceptions*, *teacher preparation programs*, *professional development*, *writing in third to fifth grade*, *writing instruction*, and *the writing process*. I used these keywords to find peer-reviewed literature related to teacher perceptions of self-efficacy in teaching writing, teacher training, and PD.

Conceptual Framework

Individuals are more successful if they are confident in their ability to create the desired outcome through their actions (Bandura, 1977). Conversely, when individuals do not feel that they can perform actions that would lead to a successful outcome, they will not be successful (Bandura, 1977). The way a teacher feels about their ability is as important or more important than their content knowledge because a teacher's confidence plays an important role in their instruction (Wyatt, 2013). Teacher confidence can be interpreted through the lens of self-efficacy and PCK.

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Shulman's (1986) theory of PCK. These concepts were used to study third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing. Bandura suggested that a person's beliefs and perceptions of their ability influence their success in completing a task. Shulman posited that in addition to teachers' knowledge in a subject area, they also need to have a strong

grasp on how to teach content. Teachers may not be able to increase their self-efficacy if they do not first have the foundation of knowledge in the subject area and how to teach that content.

TPPs can influence teachers' self-efficacy through practice and experience and vicarious experiences. Bandura (1977) stated that the most important aspect of self-efficacy is practice, suggesting that for teachers to have high self-efficacy in teaching writing, they must have practice in writing instruction in the field (Clark & Andreasen, 2021; Wyatt, 2013). Without the opportunity to practice in teaching writing, preservice teachers may not be able to develop the experience necessary to develop self-efficacy within writing to use later in the classroom. Shulman's (1986) theory of PCK suggested that teachers need a strong understanding of content knowledge paired with an understanding of how to implement teaching and learning strategies. The combination of content knowledge and knowledge of teaching practices is important for student success in the classroom (Adoniou, 2015). When teachers are knowledgeable about their subject matter and are confident in their practices, they are better able to support students.

The theory of PCK was used in several recent studies of writing instruction. For example, Shi and Baker (2022) conducted a postworkshop study of six experienced English language arts writing teachers from China and their students. Shi and Baker found that after attending the workshop, the instructors had higher PCK in their disciplines. Likewise, student writing improved.

Several recent studies of writing instruction included to the theory of self-efficacy. Hodges et al. (2019) studied the self-efficacy of preservice teachers. Findings from that

study showed that although teachers value writing, there is a disconnect in teaching strategies, which may cause lower self-efficacy among teachers. Additionally, Hatice (2018) found that although teachers may begin their teaching careers with higher perceptions of self-efficacy, that confidence wanes by the end of the first year.

The current study benefited from the conceptual framework of PCK and self-efficacy because writing is an important skill for students to use in developing a deeper understanding of the world (Graham, 2021). Writing is also a way for students to express their ideas, ask questions, and develop understanding as a part of their experience to construct meaning (Graves, 1981). A basic qualitative approach allowed me to conduct interviews to explore teachers' perspectives and answer the research questions. By using a framework informed by self-efficacy and PCK, I was able to better understand teachers' training in writing instruction and their perception of their confidence in their ability to teach writing.

In this study, Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Shulman's (1986) theory of PCK provided the foundation for my exploration of third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing. These theories were combined to explore how teachers viewed their training, knowledge, ability, and self-efficacy in teaching writing. This framework was appropriate because it enabled me to explore the unique experiences of third- to fifth-grade teachers who taught writing. According to the theories of self-efficacy and PCK, teachers are most effective when they possess deep knowledge of what they are teaching and confidence in their abilities to teach (Lane, 2018). The conceptual framework of self-

efficacy and PCK informed the development of the interview guide. I created the research questions with the intent to explore teachers' training, their experiences as writing teachers and, by extension, how those experiences may have affected their perceptions of their ability to teach writing:

1. What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing?

2. What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of confidence in their ability to teach writing?

3. How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

There is a wide variety of teacher training, PD, and ability. It is important to recognize that teachers build their knowledge through experiences, and it is also important to understand the experiences of teachers (Wyatt, 2010). These experiences influence teacher confidence. Making writing pedagogy courses available in TPPs is important for teachers to develop the confidence and knowledge needed to effectively teach writing (Sanders et al., 2020). These theories were used to inform the interview guide and the data analysis. Further, I used the conceptual framework of self-efficacy and PCK to inform my process of collecting and analyzing data.

The quality of a teacher's ability to teach a concept is one of the most important factors in student success (Lane, 2018). For more than a century, there has been discussion on what teachers should know and how to best give them this knowledge (Dewey & Archambault, 1974). Shulman (1986) contributed to this discussion with the

theory of PCK. PCK combines content and pedagogy in a way that is unique to teachers.

In recent years, PCK has garnered significant attention because teachers rely on

knowledge to facilitate student learning. In response to what teachers need to be effective

in the classroom, Shulman also defined PCK as the combination of the knowledge a

teacher has of the subject they are teaching and the understanding they have of how to

teach the subject. Content knowledge is the foundation of PCK (Barendsen & Henze,

2019; Chang et al., 2020). However, the PCK framework also includes teacher

understanding of the subject matter they are teaching, as well as an understanding of

student preconceptions and misconceptions about a subject and what makes the learning

of specific topics easy or difficult (Barendsen & Henze, 2019).

Improving teacher understanding and pedagogical practices could result in more

effective teaching and learning practices, as well as student and teachers' self-efficacy

(Grieser & Hendricks, 2018). For decades, PCK has been recognized as the foundation of

teacher effectiveness (Barendsen & Henze, 2019). Although most research on PCK

addressed math, science, and reading comprehension, the basic framework can be applied

to writing (Shi & Baker, 2022).

Teachers with strong PCK create more effective learning environments for their

students. In these classrooms, students are more engaged and active participants (Lane,

2018). This learner-centered environment gives students more choice and freedom, which

enhances their writing abilities (Darsih, 2018).

In summary, self-efficacy and PCK were combined in the current study to explore

and understand the perspectives of teachers. By analyzing data through the lens of these

frameworks, I was better able to interpret the findings in my study. The framework of self-efficacy and PCK was appropriate in supporting teachers and administrators in teaching writing.

Literature Related Key Concepts

Elementary Writing Curricula

Writing curricula in schools have evolved over the last several decades. Historically, teachers have been more focused on writing conventions than writing processes (Graham, 2021). As the standards have changed, the teaching of the writing process has shifted to focus on the components of the writing process: prewriting, planning, outlining, drafting, getting feedback, revising, editing, proofing, and sometimes reflecting or evaluating (Odendahl & Deane, 2018). This method of teaching writing established a stronger foundation for students to learn other types of writing, helped students to become more independent writers, and created an opportunity for collaboration between students and teachers (Coelho, 2020).

Teachers who were able to adapt the mandated curriculum to meet the needs of students were more effective than teachers who followed curriculum guidelines exclusively or eschewed the curriculum and designed their own (McCarthey & Woodard, 2018). McCarthey and Woodard (2018) demonstrated that the adaptation of curriculum to meet student needs is more effective and supports student success. Further, an examination of writing students found that a more comprehensive curriculum of mentor texts, grammar and vocabulary, writing, discussion, and hands-on activities was an effective teaching strategy (Hwang et al., 2022).

Writing facilitates learning by helping students explore, clarify, and think about the ideas and concepts they encounter (Graham, 2021). A qualitative study with semistructured interviews found that students struggled with clarity, critical analysis, and critical evaluation (Samanhudi & Linse, 2019). Conversely, a case study of 32 writing students found that most students benefitted from brainstorming and mapping out writing (Karim & Mustapha, 2020). This process supported students in crafting more complex writing and boosted their creativity and critical thinking. Moreover, an investigation of the teaching methodologies of 230 instructors found that critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis through writing were the most effective teaching strategies (Bezanilla et al., 2019). In addition, these teaching strategies allowed students to have a stake in what they were learning and take more ownership. Through the use of these teaching strategies, students became stakeholders in the learning process and took responsibility for their work while developing their skills as emerging writers.

Technology has influenced the writing curriculum. A total of 29 empirical peer-reviewed studies indicated that although the use of technology motivated students and increased engagement, many teachers found it challenging to integrate technology into the writing curriculum (Williams & Beam, 2019). Further, an investigation of 47 teachers regarding the integration of technology into writing instruction suggested that although many teachers found the integration of technology into the curriculum better supported student learning, many struggled with using technology as part of teaching (Regan et al., 2019). Additionally, an examination of previous studies on using technology to support

classroom writing found that technology effectively supplemented instruction to support student learning inside and outside of the classroom (Little et al., 2018).

Writing Instruction

Writing helps improve student performance in school, cultivates growth, and increases critical thinking skills. A study of first- and second-grade students suggested that students receiving direct instruction and targeted interventions showed more improvement in writing compared to their peers (Arrimada et al., 2022). Another study suggested that students receiving focused writing instruction and differentiated instruction that promoted self-regulation were more confident and successful in their learning outcomes (Gadd & Parr, 2022). Furthermore, evidence-based instruction and early intervention best support students in building their writing skills (Lam et al., 2022).

Writing is an essential skill that creates a foundation of knowledge and supports learning (Rietdijk et al., 2018). Writing is also used in a social context to communicate, share ideas, persuade, chronicle experiences, and entertain others (Graham, 2021). Writing instruction that focuses on purpose and an audience and involves clear and organized instruction of strategies for executing one or more writing processes, such as planning, drafting, and revising texts, was found to be most effective (Philippakos, 2020). However, previous studies showed that students practice infrequently in the classroom even though educational research has provided teaching strategies and best practices for writing (Hodges et al., 2019).

Writing Process

Research has indicated that the writing process approach where students critically think and problem solve as they brainstorm, outline, draft, and revise is a more effective approach to writing. However, many teachers still use a writing product approach in which they focus on mechanics (Paulick et al., 2019). This teacher-centered, direct instruction approach begins with students studying a mentor text and then producing their work based on that model (Wang & Matsumura, 2019). By focusing more on the rules of writing and form, the writing product fails to give students the critical reasoning, reflection, and writing experience needed to grow into confident and independent writers (Kadmiry, 2021).

Teaching the writing process by using creating frequent writing opportunities and then taking advantage of these opportunities by applying effective teaching strategies can improve students' writing. An investigation of 17 fourth and fifth grade teachers from 13 urban schools found that there is a paucity of text-based writing opportunities available to elementary students (Wang & Matsumura, 2019). Data from a study of 64 writing students supported the process approach of writing over the product approach as students using the process approach to writing outperformed students using the product approach to writing (Kadmiry, 2021). The process of writing includes the steps, activities, and strategies students engage in when producing a piece of writing whereas the product approach is focused solely on the end result of the piece of writing.Similarly, data from an investigation into the writing process indicated that teachers who integrate strategies and resources for students to facilitate the organization in writing generally see overall

higher student writing scores (Miller et al., 2018). Hence, writing instruction steeped in evidence-based strategies and best practices is more effective and better supports student success than teaching strategies that focus only on the final product.

Mentoring

Writing can be a stressful process for students, creating anxiety and feelings of self-doubt. Teachers need to guide and mentor students through the writing process, because learner-centered teaching approaches best support students in writing success (Kadmiry, 2021; Pacello, 2019). Strong writing instruction in the classroom could increase student achievement and success. For example, Shen and Troia (2018) conducted a case study of late elementary students with learning disabilities. Data suggested that students who received targeted instruction on how to plan and organize their writing outperformed students who did not receive the instruction.

Mentoring is also a crucial part of teacher PD. To be effective, mentoring should focus on increasing knowledge and ability. In a case study of four teachers, the researchers found that mentoring had a positive effect on the confidence and abilities of the teachers (Saglam-Arslan et al., 2022). When the teachers met together as a group with their mentor, they were more effective in planning and implementing their instructional practices. Additionally, results of a longitudinal survey of 21 K-12 teachers suggested that both new and experienced teachers found mentoring beneficial (Mosley et al., 2022). Consequently, individualized mentoring gives each teacher support tailored to teachers' needs. However, another study of preservice teacher candidates indicated that unless employed effectively, mentoring does not hold much value (Aguirre-Garzón &

Ubaque-Casallas, 2022). Thus, mentoring needs to focus on the needs of the teacher to grow their teaching practice.

Feedback

Feedback is also important for student growth in the writing process (Graham, 2021). Research on educator perspectives regarding feedback on student writing showed the importance of a learner-centered approach (McCarthy et al., 2022). Additionally, through the writing process, teachers work as guides and mentors. Indeed, effective teacher feedback supported students in growing in confidence and writing ability (Hier & Mahony, 2018). Further, written teacher feedback on grammar improvement and writing conventions in student writing (McCarthy et al., 2022).

Peer Editing

Peer editing is an important aspect of the writing process involving students exchanging papers to give each other feedback (Zhang et al., 2022). Through the process of peer editing, students engage in (a) compliments, (b) suggestions, and (c) corrections. This form of social interaction is beneficial to student learning outcomes and critical thinking as it involves collaboration, cooperation, and clarification (Campbell & Batista, 2023; Winarto, 2018). Similarly, a mixed methods study of 142 students and 20 instructors found that students benefited most from face-to-face, immediate feedback from their peers (Ahmed & Al-Kadi, 2021). This type of feedback enhances the quality of the written work and fosters a deeper understanding of effective communication strategies which can encourage empathy and receptivity to different perspectives.

Peer editing can have a positive influence on learning outcomes as it allows students to become both editor and writer. A recent quantitative investigation into peer editing demonstrated an increase in writing self-efficacy in the students that engaged in the editing process with their classmates (Campbell & Batista, 2023). These results indicated that through the process of editing, students strengthen their academic writing through the skills needed in peer editing (Zhang et al., 2022). Although peer editing can support student learning, there are potential drawbacks. For example, data from a qualitative study showed that when students give incorrect feedback, their peers could struggle more with writing (Yüce & Ataç, 2019). However, despite this potential issue, research still supports the use of peer editing in the writing process (Woodhouse & Wood, 2022).

Peer editing also enhances critical thinking. Findings from a descriptive qualitative inquiry of an English class indicated that students who engaged in peer editing were more successful than their classmates who did not use peer editing (Zhang et al., 2022). Moreover, data from a classroom action research study shows editing as a process where students make decisions based on feedback and critical analysis. Similarly, peer editing supported the growth of clarity in writing, critical engagement, and the development of argument (Campbell & Batista, 2023). Further, students engaging in peer editing took a greater sense of responsibility for editing for their classmates (Woods-Groves et al., 2022). Additionally, a qualitative study of students demonstrated enhanced engagement during the peer editing processes (Woods-Groves et al., 2022).

Electronic editing is a useful tool for students and increases student achievement in writing (Zhang et al., 2022). In a quantitative study of editing practices, students found it more efficient and effective to make any edits to their writing electronically, which made the writing processes more accessible (Woods-Groves et al., 2022). These results were supported by data from a study of online feedback that demonstrated that student writing increases with the amount of feedback they receive (Zhang et al., 2022). Indeed, the more peer feedback a student received, the higher their writing scores.

Writers Workshop

The change in how teachers teach writing also created a need for new writing programs, such as the Writers Workshop. Developed by Atwell (1984), Calkins (1983), Elbow (1973), and Graves (1981), teachers have used the framework for decades in elementary classrooms (Fisher-Ari & Flint, 2018; Reid & Moses, 2020). Several components create the framework of the Writers Workshop: brainstorming, minilessons taught by the teacher regarding the craft of writing, independent writing, peer conferences, teacher conferences, revising, and publishing (Fisher-Ari & Flint, 2018).

The Writers Workshop merged many of the same components as the writing process and created a more recursive and reflective process for student writing (Beschorner & Hall, 2021; Ramlal & Augustin, 2020). Further, in a study of 13 special needs students over the course of a year data indicated that many students struggle with the complexity of writing (Oliver, 2022). However, after implementing the Writers Workshop, students began to feel more supported and comfortable with the writing process as they were able to revisit and revise their writing over time (Oliver, 2022).

Additionally, students who revised their work took more ownership (Reid & Moses, 2020). Therefore, the iterative process gives students the opportunity for deep critical thinking and time to review and revisit their writing where they hone their skills (Hamel, 2022).

The Writers Workshop creates an apprentice approach to writing instruction. A study on elementary students using the Writers Workshop in creating comics suggested that teachers should become the mentor where they model the concepts and techniques, then guide and support students through the learning processes (Reid & Moses, 2020). Findings from other research examining elementary students exploring language and race in their writing using the Writers Workshop indicated that when teachers guide students and give feedback, the teacher creates a safe environment for students (Hartman & Machado, 2019). Further, the apprentice approach to writing is more effective when students had support and feedback from their teacher, they were more successful in completing their tasks (Schrodt et al., 2019).

Student choice is an important element of the Writers Workshop. Schrodt et al. (2019) studied the writing process of 27 students and found that students were more successful and engaged when they could research and write about topics of their choice. These results were supported by Nagl (2020) in an investigation of high school students those who participated in the Writers Workshop and had more choice in what they were writing, were more engaged and successful. Similarly, a study of 1794 students found that student choice increased engagement and student success (Vaughn et al., 2020).

Thusly, in using the Writers Workshop method, students could retain choice and control over their writing and learning processes.

The Writers Workshop model also supports motivation and independent learning. Data from one study indicated that students develop high levels of personal regulation during the Writers Workshops (Schrodt et al., 2019). Further, research on fourth-grade writing students showed that, through the Writers Workshop model, students were able to set goals for themselves and work to meet those goals (Reid & Moses, 2020). These findings seem to indicate that the Writers Workshop model was more effective for students who already were knowledgeable or confident in their writing.

6+1 Traits Writing Model

Culham (2003) developed the 6+1 traits writing model to define the aspects of writing and streamline the processes of teaching writing and fill in the gaps of the Writers Workshop model. The 6+1 traits writing model defines writing strength (Ramlal & Augustin, 2020). The 6+1 traits consist of voice, ideas, presentation, conventions, organization, word choice, and fluency (Maynard & Young, 2022; Wu et al., 2020). The traits-based writing approach has been shown to work as an effective tool for instruction and assessment and provide English language arts (ELA) teachers with strategies and resources (Coe et al., 2011). These components of the writing process are broken down further into prewriting, drafting, sharing, revising, editing, and publishing.

Application of the 6+1 traits writing model supported student growth in writing. Research conducted at an elementary school indicated that teachers who took PD on writing better supported their students (Qoura & Zahran, 2018). The students

demonstrated growth and success in writing. Moreover, a mixed methods action research study of 37 writing students showed an increase in scores after 6+1 traits writing interventions (Ramlal & Augustin, 2020). Many students were better able to overcome their challenges with writing through the 6+1 traits model. Moreover, data from two other studies indicated that the use of the 6+1 traits model increased student writing scores and student self-efficacy in writing (Maynard & Young, 2022; Miller et al., 2018).

The 6+1 traits writing model also enhances student engagement and reflection (Miller et al., 2018). The 6+1 traits model makes it more effective for teachers to teach the writing process as it allows students to see the structure within writing and provided steps for students to follow while writing (Maynard & Young, 2022). Additionally, a study of 48 students suggested the use of the 6+1 traits writing model gave students more opportunity to structure their writing and engage in critical thinking which in turn strengthened student motivation and engagement (Miller et al., 2018).

Advancement Via Individual Determination

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is an educational program that has gained significant attention in recent years for its positive impact on students' academic achievement and college readiness (AVID, 2018). AVID was developed by Mary Catherine Swanson in 1980 to support students who are often underrepresented in higher education, including those from minority backgrounds, low-income families, and first-generation college-bound students (Swanson, 1996). Currently, the program is implemented in schools across the United States and beyond, serving students from elementary school through high school.

AVID emphasizes the development of writing skills as a means to facilitate critical thinking and comprehension. Students are encouraged to take organized and purposeful notes in all their classes, ask questions, seek answers, and engage actively in the learning process. Further, AVID students participate in collaborative study groups, where they work together to tackle challenging academic content and support one another's learning. Also, AVID places a strong emphasis on organizational skills and time management, helping students become more self-directed in their studies. Finally, AVID students are taught strategies for critical reading, enabling them to better understand and analyze complex texts, and are prepared for success in college and future careers by fostering academic skills, self-confidence, and a growth mindset.

Numerous studies and research articles have explored the impact of AVID on student outcomes, and the results are promising. AVID has been associated with improved academic performance, increased high school graduation rates, and a greater likelihood of college enrollment among participating students (Plano Clark et al., 2017). Moreover, AVID is often credited with narrowing the achievement gap for underrepresented student populations, helping to level the playing field, and providing equal opportunities for success.

Step Up to Writing

Developed by Judith Langer, the Step Up to Writing program is an instructional approach that has gained recognition for its effectiveness in teaching writing skills to students across various grade levels (Auman, 2008; Langer et al., 2000). Using a color-coded system that engages students, the program is widely used in schools throughout the

United States and has been praised for its ability to improve students' writing proficiencies by providing a structured framework for teaching writing in a systematic and accessible manner. Within the program, students are guided through sentence and paragraph structure, transitions, writing conventions, and the writing process. Research studies and educational reports have shown promising outcomes associated with the Step Up to Writing program. Researchers of one study of 40 middle school students found an increase in writing ability in students who used the approach (Cihak and Castle, 2011). Further, educators have reported improved writing skills, greater clarity in student writing, and increased confidence among participants.

Teacher Preparation Programs

TPPs are important to the success of teachers and students. In one study of pre-service teachers, the participants reported that TPPs better prepared preservice teachers for what to expect in the classroom (von Hippel & Bellows, 2018). Many teacher educators suggested that strong TPPs supported them in obtaining their instructional goals (Sanders et al., 2020). These programs give preservice teachers pedagogical knowledge, theoretical knowledge, field experience, and confidence. Further, TPP programs better equip graduates with the tools necessary to support and meet the needs of students (Cho et al., 2019). Consequently, these teachers who are more confident in their ability to teach a subject are more effective in the classroom (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018).

For decades, policymakers have placed blame on TPPs for not better preparing preservice teachers to teach reading and writing (von Hippel & Bellows, 2018). However,

recent research has suggested that TPPs do better prepare preservice teachers to teach (Sanders et al., 2020). Thus, in a recent case study of preservice teachers, participants reported a growth in agency and confidence during their training (Jensen, 2019). Results from this study demonstrated that during the student teacher experience, preservice teachers grew in their confidence in their ability to teach. Further, in a quantitative examination of 476 teacher candidates to investigate the self-efficacy of teachers who teach literacy, the researchers found a positive correlation between preservice teachers' self-efficacy scores related to training experiences (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2021). Both studies demonstrated the importance of teacher preparation programs in preservice teacher training and confidence in their ability to teach, however, Jensen's (2019) study was able to dig deeper into the experience of the participants, which provided richer data.

Preservice teachers should have the opportunity to observe experienced teachers (Clark & Andreasen, 2021). Whereas practice is important, research suggested that observing master teachers can improve teaching (Fletcher, 2018). As such, a multimethod case study of eight teachers to explore the importance of observation suggested that through observation through professional learning communities emerged and reflective practices developed (Walker et al., 2022).

Additionally, TPPs create the opportunity for practice which is an influential part of self-efficacy in teaching (Clark & Andreasen, 2021). Preservice teachers need opportunities to practice their burgeoning skills to build their professional identities. For example, in a study of novice teachers, data showed mentoring and support from experienced teachers created opportunities of practice for novice teachers to grow in their

confidence and ability (Khalid & Husnin, 2019). Consequently, practice has been an important part of creating teacher confidence. Moreover, a qualitative study of 74 novice teachers found that the more practice they had, the more confident they became in the classroom (George et al., 2018).

There is inconsistency in how TPPs train preservice teachers to teach writing. Results from one study found that there were differences between teacher training programs in different states and that the programs have a substantial influence on teacher success in the classroom and by extension, student achievement (von Hippel & Bellows, 2018). Similarly, results of another study of nine ELA master's students suggested that as there are benefits to TPPs, not all programs are effective in teaching writing and that many TPPs taught prescriptive curricula, which gave preservice teachers a limited view of how to teach writing in the classroom (Kohnen, 2019). The study suggested that many teacher candidates leave their TPPs confused and limited in how they believed writing should be taught in the classroom. Further, Boche et al. (2021) explored K-6 teacher training and suggested that there is little support for preservice teachers to integrate what they learned during training into what they will teach in the classroom. The data further suggested that many TPPs offer methods and pedagogy courses in the four main subject areas (math, literacy, science, and social studies), but the content does not fully align with what teachers teach in schools. This discrepancy creates a problem for the preservice teacher to incorporate what they have learned in their TPP into their teaching.

Additionally, most literacy courses in teacher preparation programs focused on reading rather than writing (Sanders et al., 2020). Moreover, only about one-fourth of

teacher preparation programs offer writing pedagogy courses and even those courses have often missed the writing component (Kohnen, 2019; Sanders et al., 2020). This lack of writing instruction has often been due to time restraints within courses (Myers & Paulick, 2020). Additionally, Brenner and McQuirk (2019) examined 155 literacy courses and found that only two courses taught writing pedagogy. Only five included "writing" in the title, and only 38 had "writing" in the course description. When surveyed, most of the teachers in the study described a lack of confidence in their ability to teach writing.

Consequently, a lack of writing training for teachers negatively affected teacher efficacy, as well as K-12 students as writers (Kohnen, 2019). Thus, even though important, these programs have not adequately prepared preservice teachers to teach writing (Sanders et al., 2020). Equally important, many preservice teachers were not able to transfer the writing skills they learned in their pedagogy courses to their classrooms (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019). Although these preservice teachers had access to literacy courses, the courses did not support the writing pedagogy needed in teaching ELA.

Teacher Professional Development

Teachers need ability and experience to be effective in the classroom. Thus, teachers with limited personal experience in twriting or in teaching the writing process, may not be effective writing teachers (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019). Accordingly, it is important that teachers engaged in PD throughout their careers to enhance their abilities and knowledge (Svendsen, 2020).

School administrations need to support teachers with effective PD that includes collaboration. Data collected from a quantitative investigation of 3,725 teachers suggested that collaboration in PD could increase teacher retention, teacher success, and student success (Richter et al., 2022). Further, a literature review by Svendsen (2020) found that the components of effective PD included sustainability, modes of delivery, learning communities, trust, and time. Equally important, teachers who consistently participated in PD stayed current with the latest teaching trends and enhanced their ability to meet their students' learning needs (Svendsen, 2020).) Further, data from a study of five teachers and two PD mentors supported the need for mentors in PD (Walters et al., 2019).

However, to be effective, PD should be authentic and meaningful. Data from a qualitative study of five teachers across two states indicated that long-term, focused PD increased teacher ability and effectiveness (Jitendra et al., 2022). Additionally, findings from a study of 133,336 students and 7434 teachers demonstrated that teachers who engaged in PD were more effective in the classroom (Fischer et al., 2018). Moreover, another qualitative on PD demonstrated a positive effect on teacher empowerment and confidence (Khan et al., 2019).

Indeed, PD should also engage teachers in dynamic learning cycles. As such, a mixed-methods study focused on the PD of 39 educators across six countries found benefits of PD including deeper creativity, communication, and motivation (Ivanova et al., 2022). These experiences may help teachers gain a new understanding of writing pedagogy and content (Evens et al., 2018). Equally important, guided, purposeful, and

orchestrated support of teachers, particularly with writing instruction and the practice of self-reflection on who they are as writers themselves, can be a more effective way to support teachers in teaching writing (Svendsen, 2020).

PD is also important to student success. In a qualitative study of teachers, data suggested that teachers who participated in PD demonstrated an increase in pedagogical understanding and student learning in their classrooms (Evens et al., 2018). Further, the findings of another study of 540,000 student assessments showed that students with teachers who are active in PD scored higher than their counterparts whose teachers did not engage in PD (Li et al., 2022). These findings are important as they support the need for additional training and continued education.

PD is also a way for teachers to build their skills as writers. Research supports the need for teachers to be skilled in the concepts they teach (Hennessy et al., 2021). Students of teachers who engage in regular PD to grow their skills were more successful than students of teachers who did not participate (Shi & Chen, 2020). Similarly, in another qualitative study on teacher content knowledge, data indicated that every participant in the study felt more confident in their teaching after completing PD (Abdurrahman et al., 2019). Another inquiry explored teacher knowledge and practice and found, again, that teachers who practiced their skills were more effective in the classroom (Gess-Newsome et al., 2019). Essentially, the more a teacher knows about the subject they teach, the more they can effectively teach their students.

Additionally, PD is a way for teachers to build confidence in their ability to teach writing. For example, ELA teachers who had participated in PD focused more on the

process of writing rather than the product of writing (Kwok, 2022). Further, teachers and students who participated in PD and training focused on increasing the writing quality of students and the confidence of the teachers in teaching writing (Shi & Chen, 2020). Data from another study suggested that although teachers faced difficulty in being able to teach the amount of material, they grew in confidence in their ability to teach writing and give students quality feedback for revisions (Philippakos, 2020).

Teacher Confidence

Teachers' confidence influences motivation and instructional decisions. Confidence is an important indicator of how much effort teachers will expend on an activity and how long they will persevere when confronted with challenges (Nesmith & Cooper, 2020). Teachers with higher levels of confidence understand that they can support students by implementing various activities, strategies, and instructional methods (Hennessy et al., 2021). Data from an examination of 523 preservice teachers showed that although these preservice teachers initially had high confidence, those confidence levels dropped after the first year of classroom teaching (Clark & Andreasen, 2021). The correlation of higher confidence regarding knowledge and ability was supported in a mixed methods study of 28 teachers where there was a correlation between ability and confidence. This finding supports the need for PCK and classroom teaching experience (Bifuh-Ambe, 2020). Similarly, research regarding American and Canadian preservice teachers demonstrated that the more training they had, the more confident they became (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018).

One way to support teacher confidence is ongoing training and PD opportunities. Data from a research study of 84 poetry teachers suggested high levels of reported confidence among some teachers who attended workshops and additional training (Hennessy et al., 2021). In similar research where 41 Florida middle school teachers were surveyed pre- and post-PD regarding the alignment of instruction to state standards showed a positive correlation between PD training and teacher confidence (Baez-Hernandez, 2019). In another study of 953 high school teachers, the data demonstrated that the students of teachers with extensive training in writing instruction had higher scores on writing assessments (Coelho, 2020). In both studies, the teachers who participated in PD were far more confident and effective in the classroom. The teachers' students also showed increased understanding and growth in ability and content knowledge.

Teachers build their confidence through experience and problem solving. Findings from a study demonstrated that teachers create their professional identities through problem-solving and building confidence (Khalid & Husnin, 2019). Thus, the more a teacher practices, the more effective they are in the classroom. Equally important research on 848 teachers found that when teachers improved skills they felt less confident in, they grew in their ability and confidence (Regier, 2021). Additionally, the more experience a teacher had, the more confident they were (Barton & Dexter, 2020). Furthermore, data from an investigation into teacher confidence development indicated teachers benefit from training in writing pedagogy, and through practice, their confidence grew, and they were able to see themselves as writers (Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2021).

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review explored third to fifth grade teacher training in teaching writing and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. Chapter 2 also included the literature search strategy, the conceptual framework of Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, and Shulman's (1986) definition of PCK. In this chapter, the literature review explored the themes of the writing process, history of writing instruction, writing curriculum, teacher preparation programs, PCK, teacher confidence, and teachers' self-efficacy in teaching writing.

Although writing has long been a mainstay in American elementary education, how the writing process has been taught has shifted over time from a focus on conventions to a focus on writing as a process. This shift created a necessity for more student-focused teaching practices such as the Writers Workshop. Despite these changes, teacher preparation programs and PD focused mainly on reading instruction which left a gap in teacher training in writing instruction and their confidence in teaching writing.

Teacher preparation programs are key to training teachers to teach writing by creating opportunities for teacher candidates to build their own beliefs about writing, practice in writing, and practice in teaching writing. This practice supports the development of positive self-efficacy. Though several studies explored available courses within teacher preparation programs, very few explored the impact of these programs on how teachers perceived their self-efficacy in teaching writing. Similarly, researchers found that experience-based confidence guides effective writing instruction; therefore. it is necessary to provide additional writing experiences in teacher preparation programs

and PD. Increasing teacher PCK is one way to better increase teachers' confidence in their ability to teach writing.

In Chapter 3, I address the research design, the rationale for its choice, and the role of the researcher. I also discuss methodology including participants, instrumentation and data collection. Finally, I address data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and the ethical process.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. In Chapter 3, I describe the measures, participants, procedures, and rationale for the methodology employed. Next, I outline the study design, data collection, guiding framework, and research questions. I follow this with a description of the participants and the process for informed consent. Next, I discuss the strategies used to establish trustworthiness, delineate the research protocols and materials employed throughout the study, and discuss the treatment of the qualitative and quantitative data sources. I close with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

This study was guided by the conceptual framework of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and PCK (Shulman, 1986). I chose this framework because it allowed me to gain a deeper knowledge of third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach writing. The research questions were designed to address teacher experiences, educational backgrounds, and subsequent training:

1. What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing?

2. What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing?

3. How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

Central Concepts

The central concepts in this study were teacher training, teacher confidence, self-efficacy, teacher perceptions of their self-efficacy, PCK, and writing instruction. The phenomenon in this study was third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing. The conceptual framework that grounded this study included Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Shulman's (1986) theory of PCK. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy addresses an individual's beliefs and perception of their ability to complete a task. Shulman's framework of PCK refers to the combination of teachers' content knowledge and their ability to effectively teach the material to students.

Research Tradition and Rationale

For this study, I used the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach involves research strategies to understand people and phenomena in ways that reveal how people create meaning from their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I considered a quantitative approach; however, the purpose of my study did not require statistical analysis to examine relationships between variables, which would have required a larger sample (see Burkholder et al., 2016). The effectiveness of educational research and the need for exploring the experiences of participants supported the basic qualitative design for the current study (see Percy et al., 2015).

I followed the basic qualitative design by conducting semistructured interviews. The basic qualitative design is used to explore a phenomenon by striving to understand something new (Caelli et al., 2003). Initially, I considered a narrative design; however, I

needed a larger sample of third- to fifth-grade teachers than the narrative design would have allowed. Grounded theory was also considered; however, the required sample size would have been too large, which could have led to issues with data saturation.

Exploring third- to fifth-grade teachers' experiences in teaching writing necessitated interviewing teachers and gathering their responses. It is important to have multiple interviews to gain a rich understanding of the experiences of the participants as they relate to the phenomenon (Caelli et al., 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In a basic qualitative study, the researcher analyses the data and uses coding to incorporate meaningful descriptions of the findings (Saldaña, 2016). I conducted interviews to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was as an observer. An observer is a researcher who makes use of their knowledge of the phenomenon and uses their knowledge in the direct observation of participants during the interview process (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I did not manipulate any of the responses by the participants. I read the interview questions as composed in the interview guide (see Appendix A). I maintained responsibility for all facets of the research process including identification of the study, recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination of findings. I have been a writing instructor for 20 years working with K–12 and general education diploma students. I also own my own tutoring company where I work privately with students on

writing. In my role as a researcher, I did not have a professional relationship or supervisory role with any of the participants.

Bias is a concern in qualitative research. Researchers are not able to completely eliminate bias, but they can be honest and transparent in the research process and recognize limitations (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). One possible area of bias in my study was my position as a writing teacher. I managed my potential biases through reflective journaling. Creswell and Creswell (2017) suggested that reflective journaling is an effective way to track research procedures for data collection and analysis. To control my bias during the interviews, I did not comment on anything regarding the study and did not make any comments that may have reflected my views on writing training or writing pedagogy.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The participants for this study were third- to fifth-grade teachers who had taught the process of writing. I used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a form of sampling in which researchers choose members of the population depending on their knowledge of the research phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Welman & Kruger, 1999). This method is useful when researchers have prior knowledge about the topic of their study and how to access a particular subset of participants (Babbie, 2004). Participants in my study met the following inclusion criteria: (a) have completed a teacher preparation program, (b) have teaching credentials, and (c) have experience teaching third, fourth, or fifth grade for at least 2 years.

The sample for this study was nine third- to fifth-grade teachers in the United States who had experience teaching the process of writing. Mirick and Wladkowski (2019) suggested this sample size is justifiable because the researcher is able to make connections across participants while maintaining the individuality of each voice through the collection of their stories. I targeted teachers in third to fifth grade because students in these grades are beginning to change developmentally and cognitively, moving from learning to write to writing to learn (see Tate & Warschauer, 2018). Third- to fifth-grade teachers were the most suitable participants for my study because they had experience teaching the foundation of the writing process.

To obtain participants, I posted a flyer to social media and to Walden's participant pool. If the social media site required permission, then I requested it. I also used snowball sampling to recruit participants. After prospective participants emailed me to indicate their interest, I responded by sending the consent form, asking participants to confirm a date and time for the interview, and asking participants to forward the request to other teachers who may be interested.

I met data saturation when no new information was collected during interviews and no new codes were needed. This process was supported by Groenewald (2004) who established that data collection is only complete when there is a cessation of new perspectives relating to the topic. I interviewed eight participants and conducted one more interview to confirm data saturation. At that point, I ceased interviewing teachers.

Instrumentation

Qualitative studies often include semistructured interviews because they allow the researcher to explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs on a topic (Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2016). Semistructured interviews are useful because the participants may feel more comfortable and willing to elaborate on their perspective on a particular topic. Further, qualitative studies focus on the experiences and perceptions of people (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Therefore, the semistructured interview was the data collection strategy used to answer the research questions in my study.

Interview guides are an important part of a qualitative study that add structure and guidance to the process and act as the main data collection instrument (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2016). Based on the suggestions of Rubin and Rubin (2016), I modeled the interview guide (see Appendix A) after the in-depth semistructured qualitative interview approach, which included introducing myself, explaining the purpose of the interview, and asking interview questions based on the key aspects from the literature review and the conceptual framework. The interview guide also included a request for permission for a follow-up and a reminder of the information aligned with the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the interview guide allowed for openness, flexibility, and improvisation to help the interview be more conversational and natural.

Interview questions are key to the interview process. Creswell and Creswell (2017) indicated that interview questions can influence what can be learned. I used my conceptual framework to create 13 interview questions, which supported the proper alignment between my research questions and the interview guide. I used open-ended

questions in this study. Further, the interview questions helped me guide the interview

discussion and support the development of emergent themes.

I took steps to ensure that the interview questions were adequate to address the

research questions. By preparing interview questions ahead of time that aligned with the

research questions, I was able to foresee circumstances in which obtaining more detailed

responses might be required (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017)). To create the interview

guide, I began with the research questions. I divided the first research question (What are

third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of

teaching writing?) into two interview questions. One questions was asked teachers to

describe how they teach writing in their classrooms. The second questions asked teachers

to discuss what strategies they use to teach writing. I divided the second research

question (What are third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their

ability to teach writing?) into four interview questions. One of the interview questions

included asking participants to describe their comfort in teaching writing and what makes

them comfortable in teaching writing. For the third research question (How do teachers

perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability

to use effective strategies to teach writing?), I again broke down the question into a series

of interview questions for the participants. For example, one of the interview questions

asked participants to discuss what effective writing instruction strategies their TPPs

provided.

Content validity is imperative for a study and is the degree to which a test or

assessment instrument evaluates all aspects of the topic, construct, or behavior that it is

created to measure (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For the current study, I established content validity prior to interviewing the participants by making sure the interview guide (see Appendix A) had sufficient questions to gather information to answer the research questions. After I created the interview guide, my doctoral committee served as an expert panel to review the interview questions to ensure content validity. The committee members addressed the alignment of my research questions and interview questions, along with the interview form and style.

Procedures for Data Collection

To collect data, I conducted nine interviews through the Zoom video platform. Remote interviews are an acknowledged strategy for in-person interviews (Gray et al., 2020; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019). The interviews took approximately 45 minutes of the participants' time and were audio recorded through Zoom.

Semistructured interviews are a common practice for novice researchers and can yield useful data for analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I used semistructured interviews to collect data. After, I transcribed the interviews using an online audio transcription service and checked the transcripts using manual transcription. Next, I used axial coding, which is an inductive technique, to analyze the data and identify themes.

If the initial recruitment efforts were unsuccessful in yielding enough participants to reach saturation, so I reposted the flyers to social media sites and used snowball sampling to recruit potential participants. To do this, participants suggested other potential participants to interview. At the end of each interview, I read the final note from the interview guide (see Appendix A), which reminded participants in of the member

checks and how the analysis of the findings would be shared at the end of the study.

Participants exited the interview by ending the Zoom call. There was no need for a

follow-up interview with participants. Also, I sent copies of the analysis and conclusions

for a second verification.

Data Analysis Plan

The goal of data analysis is to understand the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I

used inductive data analysis through the use of Quirkos coding software to assist in data

management. Inductive coding is a comprehensive analysis of data to develop categories

or themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). First, I developed and assigned 10 a priori codes

based on the literature review and conceptual framework. In the next round, I engaged in

open coding with the assistance of the software to look for emergent codes from the data

that addressed the three RQs:

1. What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content
    knowledge of teaching writing?

2. What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their
    ability to teach writing?

3. How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to
    their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

Then I used the Quirkos software again to engage in axial coding to create

categories from the codes and develop a coding table. Reflecting on the recommendations

of Creswell and Creswell (2017), the coding table was revised throughout the process to

ensure accuracy. The coding table also ensured that all the codes were included. After the

development of categories, I organized the codes into themes. From the themes, a more detailed narrative should emerge regarding third to fifth grade teacher training in writing and their perceptions of their ability to teach writing.

Asking questions during the analysis process is also important (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Some of the questions I asked myself is, "What is this" or "What does this represent?". As I continue to analyze the data, I used a journal to organize my thoughts and reflect on the data. Throughout the process, there was a continuous reflection on how the data aligns with the research questions.

There is the possibility for discrepant or negative case analysis. A discrepant case would be any part of the data that does not fit the identified patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The importance of a discrepant or negative case analysis is that it might enhance or broaden the emerging themes or present an alternative viewpoint. In all, analyzing these cases could provide a deeper understanding of the strengths and limitations of the research data. The only discrepant case that was Participant 5, who did not want to engage in additional training as they were close to retirement. As the rest of their interview was valid for the study, I kept the interview.

Finally, I sought guidance and instruction from the members of my dissertation committee throughout the data analysis process. This guidance assisted in developing deeper understanding and stronger analytic skills. Additionally, the members of my dissertation committee also engaged in discussion, collaboration, analysis of the interview, transcription, and coding processes that conveyed the findings of the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

One way I ensured this study's trustworthiness is to create evidence of credibility. Credibility is the researcher's capacity to prove internal validity and that the qualitative research study is authentic (Guba, 1981; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Member checking is an important aspect to ensure credibility (Patton, 2015). Thomas (2017) supported the use of member checking as an indicator of the quality of the analysis. At the conclusion of the study, I wrote out my findings and sent a copy to each participant with an invitation to schedule a follow-up interview. None of the participants elected to schedule a follow-up interview.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which research findings can be adapted to other people or other settings (Burkholder et al., 2016; Toma, 2011). One method for achieving transferability includes having detailed descriptions of the data themselves as well as the context. This strategy is important as it allows for comparisons to other situations. For this study, I used contextual information that supported the study and descriptions of the participants collected during the interviews. For example, I embedded a component for transferability into my research questions with R2: "How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to teach writing?" I did this so that my study may be relevant for colleges and PD coordinators that train and prepare teachers. Making a direct connection to the transferability of the research questions promotes reliability and validity while increasing the rigor of the study

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Furthermore, potential transferability can be addressed during the final summation in Chapter 5 of this study.

Dependability

Dependability is the constancy and reliability of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To ensure dependability, I reflective journaling (see Creswell and Creswell, 2017). This type of journaling allowed me to monitor biases and personal influence during the interviews and data collection.

Confirmability

Confirmability of a qualitative study is the readers' ability to confirm your conclusions (Burkholder et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, confirmability establishes that the researcher has obtained neutral and confirmable data that is sufficiently free of bias (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Confirmability was established through the transparency of explanations provided throughout the study, addressing any personal or professional biases, outlining the data collection processes and results, and using member checking. I employed member checking as a check in the process with participants during data analysis in order to verify the accuracy of the findings. Additionally, I used reflective journaling throughout the study to note my experiences, observations, and opinions. My use of reflective journaling lessened the chances of adding my bias to the participants' experiences and perceptions. Finally, I ensured confirmability by taking steps to ensure the findings of the study are the result of the experiences and perceptions of the participants, rather than my opinions or preferences as the researcher as per.

Ethical Procedures

Agreements

Before beginning any data collection, I gained approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. The approval number was 04-13-23-0989623. I submitted documents to the IRB, which explained how I certified and observed the confidentiality of the participants and the protection of confidential information acquired during the participant interviews. For this study, it was important to follow all established federal guidelines and policies. Based on the suggestions of Rubin and Rubin (2016), these guidelines and policies were created to protect the ethical assurances of the study and are important for unbiased and ethical significance.

After obtaining the approval from IRB, I recruited participants through a flyer posted to social media, and the Walden participant pool. Next, I provided informed consent information using the form in Appendix B. This consent meant that I gave the participants clear information regarding the research and their role as a participant. I asked the participants to agree to the interview by submitting an email stating "I agree" or "I consent" before the start of the interview process.

Treatment of Participants

Before each interview, I read an introductory script reminding participants that they are volunteers and may choose to end their session with me at any time, or they may choose to not remain part of the study. I assigned each participant a participant number to use in the reflective journaling, coding documents, and results. The participant number

protected the participant and maintained confidentiality throughout the study and publication of findings.

Treatment of Data

To protect participant confidentiality and to keep the trustworthiness intact, I collected the data through Zoom, and used Quirkos software to transcribe and code the data. Through this method, I had more control over the documentation to ensure the security of the data. As recommended by Saldaña (2016), I labeled the transcripts with a numeric code to ensure privacy, then keep the transcripts and other identifying data from the study in a safe, password-protected digital space on my personal computer. After the requisite time of five years, I will safely and thoroughly destroy the records by deleting and erasing the files. The safeguards, in addition to the extra effort of member checks, can fortify the ethical considerations of my study.

<div align="center">

Summary

</div>

Chapter 3 includes an introduction that outlines how I conducted my basic qualitative study by describing the research design, the rationale, and finally the methodology. In discussing the methodology, I outlined how I intend to obtain participation from third to fifth grade writing teachers and how I avoided bias. Finally, I addressed awareness of the issues of trustworthiness and shared how I am taking steps to reduce threats to validity and ethics.

Chapter 4: Results

In Chapter 4, I present an overview of the research design and summarize the findings. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing. The following research questions aligned with the study's purpose and were related to the conceptual framework:

1. What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing?

2. What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing?

3. How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

In this chapter, I first describe the setting for the study and outline demographic information for the participants. Next, I provide evidence of trustworthiness by explaining data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, I present my research results, organize the data based on the themes, and end the chapter with a summary of the findings.

I employed semistructured interviews that enabled the participants to respond openly and honestly. Next, I examined the interview responses and conducted multiple rounds of coding to analyze the data. This systematic approach facilitated the identification of key terms, phrases, and themes expressed during the interviews.

Study Setting

The participants were teachers from Arizona, Nebraska, and Washington. Given the geographical distances, Zoom web-conferencing was chosen as the platform to conduct the online interviews. Remote interviews have been recognized as a valid approach to conducting in-person interviews (Gray et al., 2020; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019). I conducted the semistructured interviews from my home office. Participants were given the freedom to choose their setting for the web-conferencing interviews conducted through the Zoom platform. One participant conducted the interview while in their car; seven participants were at home, and one participant was at work but alone in their classroom. During three interviews, there were brief interruptions due to internet connectivity issues, but they were resolved without further interruptions. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. No personal or organizational conditions were reported that influenced the interpretation of the data.

Demographics

Participants' teaching experiences ranged from 8 to 40 years (see Table 1). Participants included nine teachers located in a school setting in the United States. One participant was located in Nebraska, one was located in Washington, and seven were located in Arizona. All participants had experience teaching writing to third-, fourth-, or fifth-grade students.

Table 1

Research Participants' Demographics

Participant	Education level	Additional certification	Experience teaching (years)
P1	Master's degree	Yes: national boards	20
P2	Master's degree	No	17
P3	Bachelor's degree	No	23
P4	Master's degree	No	8
P5	Master's degree	No	40
P6	Bachelor's degree	No	20
P7	Doctoral degree	Yes: national boards	17
P8	Bachelor's degree	No	21
P9	Bachelor's degree	No	16

Data Collection

Upon receipt of IRB approval, I posted the social media flier (see Appendix B) on Facebook and LinkedIn. I emailed nine participant invitations and consent forms and received replies of "I consent" from all potential participants. Once I received the participants' "I consent" responses, I contacted each participant individually to inquire about their preferred dates and times for the interview. Once I received their preferences, I followed up by sending a Zoom web-conferencing invitation and link, confirming the date and time for each interview. After conducting nine interviews, I reviewed the collected data and observed that the information provided by the participants became repetitious, indicating an acceptable level of data saturation (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Data collection commenced on April 29, 2023, and concluded on June 5, 2023.

For data collection, I employed an interview guide and a set of interview questions (see Appendix A). The interview guide consisted of an opening statement and open-ended questions that I developed to encourage participants to engage in open

dialogue and provide detailed responses. Throughout the interviews, I referred to a

printed version of the interview guide for reference and note-taking purposes.

Additionally, I engaged in reflective journaling during the data collection and analysis

phases. Reflective journaling bolstered the dependability and confirmability of the study

by allowing me to track and document my thoughts and reflections throughout the

process.

To capture participants' responses during the semistructured interviews, I

employed two audio recording applications: Zoom on my computer and Voice Recorder

on my cell phone. These recordings were password protected to protect participants'

confidentiality. Following the completion of each interview, I used Microsoft Word's

microphone feature to transcribe the audio files. The transcriptions were stored in a

dedicated password-protected zip drive, ensuring the security of the data.

Following the initial manual transcription, I engaged in a comprehensive review

by examining each transcript while listening to the corresponding audio recording. This

approach allowed me to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions and become familiar

with the data from each participant. During the verification process, I assessed the

accuracy of the initial transcriptions and made minor adjustments to remove any typos,

thereby aligning the transcripts with the audio recordings. Additionally, I identified and

corrected any minor errors in the transcripts that emerged during the comparison with the

audio recordings. Next, I uploaded each transcript to the Quirkos data analysis software

application and employed a coding process encompassing a combination of a priori,

open, and axial codes. This coding procedure enabled the generation of codes, categories,

and themes from the transcripts. The data analysis was consistent with the approach described in Chapter 3 without any deviations.

During the data collection process, I encountered some unexpected circumstances. Initially, I encountered several individuals who turned out to be fraudulent potential participants who had expressed interest in being part of the study. After conducting the first interview with one of these individuals, I reached out to my chair for guidance and support. It became evident that the responses provided by this participant could compromise the integrity of the study (see Roehl & Harland, 2022). I decided to exclude the fraudulent participant from the study. To ensure the recruitment of reliable participants moving forward, I discontinued the use of social media flyers and adopted a snowball sampling approach to recruit the remaining participants.

Data Analysis

I began the data analysis process after conducting the interviews. To maintain an audit trail, I kept a journal to document the steps taken. Qualitative analysis methods and emergent coding were applied to the participant's responses (see Saldaña, 2016). The data analysis process was iterative, involving multiple tiers of procedures to organize and review the gathered data.

Initially, I established 10 a priori codes based on my purpose statement and literature review. In my first cycle of data analysis, I reviewed the transcripts and applied the a priori codes. In my second round of coding, I used open coding conduced line by line to reduce the likelihood of introducing personal bias to the participants' responses (see Saldaña, 2015). Open coding allowed me to locate emergent codes and make sense

of the data. Through this process, I found an additional 47 codes. I reviewed the codes and combined those that were duplicates or shared similar meanings. Repeated codes were recorded as keywords, terms, or phrases, which were regrouped and organized into the final codes.

My next step was to create categories. It took several attempts to create the categories. After I organized the codes into categories, I condensed the categories into themes that aligned with the research questions. Throughout this process, I used Quirkos data analysis software to create color-coded groups to place codes and create categories. I ended up with 36 codes, six categories, and six themes.

I created Tables 2–4 to reflect the data related to the corresponding research question. Table 2 illustrates the data that supported RQ1. Table 2 includes 16 codes, two categories, and one theme. First I grouped Codes 1–12 to form Category 1: instructional strategies and approaches. Second, I grouped Codes 13 and 14 to create Category 2: programs and curricular resources. These codes and categories were combined to form two themes. Theme 1 was teachers developed their PCK through experience and training. Theme 2 was teachers used their PCK to employ differentiated teaching strategies to effectively teach writing.

Table 2

Themes and Codes Connected to RQ1

Code	Category	Theme	Quote
Integration Innovative teaching strategies Differentiation Writing styles Writing pedagogy Decoding and encoding strategies Holistic approach Student-centered Student engagement strategies Writing styles Experiences with PCK Experimentation Resources Educational programs used to support student writing Cross curricular writing Educational programs used to support student writing Observations Successes Struggles Needs	Instructional strategies Curricular resources Observations teachers had about teaching writing.	Theme 1: Teachers developed their PCK through experience and training. Theme 2: Teachers used their PCK to employ differentiated teaching strategies to effectively teach writing.	P1: "I started trying to figure out how to teach my students how to write and it was always very much like I don't know how to get to them or how to figure this out." P2: "I felt like I had this rush to gain as much knowledge as I could and writing was definitely an area I didn't feel super prepared."

As the participants responded to the interview questions pertaining to RQ1, they shared their perspectives and experiences regarding their PCK and how they use it to teach writing. Their responses covered aspects such as their approaches and strategies for teaching, the educational programs they used, and their struggles and successes. From the gathered data, the initial set of themes that emerged highlighted the growth of their PCK through experience and their use of PCK in differentiated teaching strategies. Keywords and phrases, including *integration*, *differentiation*, *writing pedagogy*, *experience with*

PCK, and *resources*, effectively captured the breadth and depth of the codes aligned with themes related to growth, experience, training, and strategies.

Table 3

Themes and Codes Connected to RQ2

Code	Category	Theme	Quote
Experience in teaching writing	Teacher experience and growth	Theme 3: Teachers believed that the more time they taught writing, the more confidence they gained in teaching writing.	P4: "Writing was not my strength."
Trust	Challenges and constraints		P7: "I feel very comfortable now as a professional teaching writing."
Reflection	Student accommodations and needs		
Adaptation			
Went of script			
Growing confidence		Theme 4: Teachers believe they faced numerous struggles with student accommodations and needs.	
Creativity			
Validation			
Cultivating customization			
Restrictive curriculum			
Cookie-cutter curriculum			
Standards-based requirements			
Not enough time			
Frustrations in teaching			
Accommodations			
So many kids need accommodations			
Scaffolding			
Students not writing at grade level			

I grouped Codes 15–23 to form Category 3: teacher experience and growth. I grouped Codes 24–28 to make Category 4: challenges and constraints. I grouped Codes 29–32 to create Category 5: student needs and accommodations. The codes and categories were combined to create Themes 3 and 4. Theme 3 was teachers believed that the more time they taught writing, the more confidence they gained in teaching writing. Theme 4 was teachers believed they faced numerous struggles with student accommodations and needs.

As the participants responded to the interview questions pertaining to RQ2, they shared their perspectives of their confidence and experiences regarding teaching writing in the classroom. Their discussions encompassed various aspects such as their confidence, restrictive curriculum, and frustrations. From the gathered data, the initial set of themes that emerged highlighted participants' growth of confidence through experience and the struggles they faced with student accommodations and needs. Keywords and phrases, including *standards-based requirements*, *not enough time*, *students not writing at grade level*, *trust*, and *confidence*, effectively captured the breadth and depth of the codes aligned with themes related to struggles faced, identified needs, motivation, and confidence.

Table 4 includes codes, categories, quotes, and four themes related to RQ3: How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

Table 4

Themes and Codes Connected to RQ3

Code	Category	Theme	Quote
Experiences in TPPs Writing training Professional development and training No writing pedagogy classes in TPP	Preparation and training	Theme 5: Teachers believed they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs. Theme 6: Teachers believed they received writing pedagogy during professional development but desired more training.	P1: "I don't feel like I was ever prepared in my teacher program." P2: "I think the instructors being teachers [is] super beneficial." P4: "Moving up to 4th, I had a great mentor on my side [whose] strength was writing." P1: "We had trainings all the time where it was just from teachers from our school, or we were sent to trainings

I grouped Codes 33 through 36 to create Category 6: preparation and training. The codes and category were combined to create Themes 5 and 6. Theme 5 revealed that teachers believed they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs. Theme 6 revealed that teachers believed they received writing pedagogy during PD but desired more training.

The participants shared their perceptions and experiences regarding the interview questions. They discussed their teacher preparation programs and additional training in writing and writing pedagogy. Data analysis revealed themes that highlighted the lack of preparation in their teacher preparation programs and the desire for additional training. Keywords and phrases such as *I didn't feel prepared*, *training*, and *mentoring* emphasized the breadth and depth of the codes associated with themes related to teacher preparation programs, PD, and mentoring.

Discrepant Cases

There were nine participants in this study. All the participants were located in a

school setting in the United States, had teaching certifications, and taught third, fourth, or

fifth grade. The only discrepant case that was found was Participant 5 who did not want

to engage in additional training as they were close to retirement.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This qualitative study incorporated various approaches to ensure its

trustworthiness, including the establishment of credibility, transferability, dependability,

and confirmability (see Patton, 2015). The study initially faced challenges related to

distance and limited participant availability, which were carefully considered and

addressed. The trustworthiness of the study was demonstrated through comprehensive

discussions of the research process, emphasizing reliability and validity, which were

essential in ensuring the collection of robust and accurate data (see Rubin & Rubin,

2016).

Credibility

To enhance the credibility of this study, I implemented the data collection

methods described in the methodology section of my dissertation. Throughout the

research design, data collection, and analysis processes, I employed multiple methods and

approaches to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the study findings, (see Patton,

2015). Specifically, I established credibility by conducting semistructured interviews

with teachers who met the participant criteria. Additionally, I employed member

checking, which involved engaging in communication with each participant to validate

the accuracy and significance of the study findings. Reflective journaling and emergent

coding were also used to strengthen the credibility of the study. These measures

collectively contributed to the believability and truthfulness of the research findings.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability, also known as external validity, addresses

the applicability or transferability of the study findings to a broader context or different

situations (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To establish transferability in this study,

I employed various strategies. Firstly, I incorporated background information that

supported the study and provided detailed descriptions of participants' perceptions and

experiences. This rich and detailed data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of

the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, I engaged in reflective journaling

throughout the interview and data analysis process (see Patton, 2015). This practice

helped me maintain objectivity and separate my thoughts from the participants'

perspectives, thus contributing to the trustworthiness and transferability of the findings.

By providing detailed descriptions of the literature that supported my study and the

participants' experiences, I aim to enable other researchers to evaluate the findings and

consider the extent to which they apply to other research settings (see Rubin & Rubin,

2016). These measures enhance the likelihood of transferability for the study and increase

the potential for its findings to be applied beyond the immediate research context.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the

data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To establish dependability in this study, I have taken several

steps. First, I provided a thorough description of the research processes employed throughout the study. By clearly outlining the research design, data collection methods, and analysis procedures, I have offered future audiences and researchers a comprehensive understanding of the study's methodology, which contributes to its dependability. Furthermore, I addressed the dependability of the study through the use of participants' interviews and member checking processes. By engaging in dialogue and feedback with the participants, I ensured that their perspectives were accurately captured and represented in the findings. This iterative process adds to the dependability of the study by incorporating the voices and insights of the participants themselves. It is also important to note that although the study's processes and methods contribute to its dependability, future researchers should recognize that replication may yield different results. Each study is influenced by unique contextual factors and individual perspectives, and therefore, variations in findings are to be expected (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). By acknowledging this possibility, researchers can approach future replications with an understanding of the potential for divergent outcomes, thus contributing to the ongoing development of knowledge in the field.

Confirmability

Confirmability, also known as objectivity, is crucial in qualitative research as it ensures that the study is free from bias and prejudice (Patton, 2015). In this study, I took several measures to promote confirmability and maintain a neutral and unbiased stance. To address confirmability, I provided transparent explanations throughout the study. I openly discussed the research topic, any potential personal or professional biases, and the

reasons behind the chosen data collection and analysis processes. By being transparent, I aimed to minimize the potential influence of bias on the findings and conclusions of the study. Additionally, I employed member checking as a method to enhance confirmability where I drafted the findings of the study and sent them to the participants. Through this communication with the participants, I sought to validate and clarify the participants' assessment of the overall findings. This iterative process of feedback and clarification helped to ensure that the interpretations and representations of the data were accurate and aligned with the participants' perspectives. Further, reflective journaling also played a role in establishing confirmability. By documenting my thoughts, reflections, and potential biases throughout the research process, I aimed to maintain self-awareness and minimize the effect of personal biases on the study's outcomes. Member checking emails were sent to each participant to review the overall findings. Despite reaching out to all nine participants, none of them provided any additional feedback in response to the emails.

Results by Research Question

In this section, I present the findings of the study aligned with the research questions. The interview questions were structured to engage participants in conversations that would produce data to provide insights and acquired understanding about the three research questions presented in the study:

1. What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing?

2. What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing?

3. How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

A total of six themes emerged from the data analysis and aligned with the two research questions.

Research Question 1

RQ1 asked: What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing? Based on the research question, two themes emerged. I organized this section according to the two identified themes.

- Theme 1: Teachers developed their PCK through experience and training.

- Theme 2: Teachers used their PCK to employ differentiated teaching strategies to effectively teach writing.

Figure 1 shows RQ1 and the two related themes.

Figure 1

Themes Related to RQ1
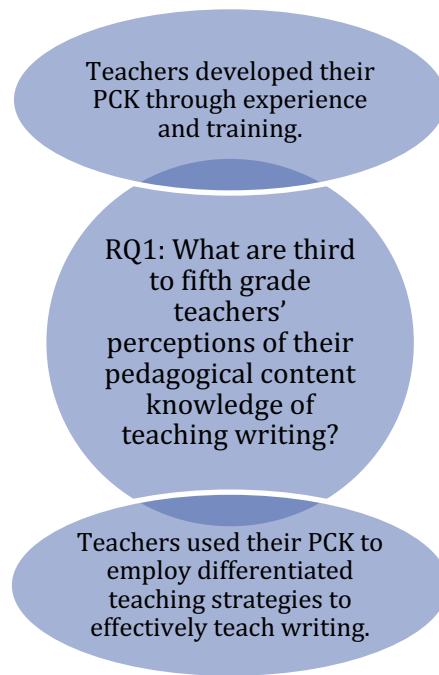
Theme 1

In Theme 1, the participants discussed their development of PCK through

experience and training in teaching writing. Participant 1 shared the initial challenges

they faced in teaching writing, highlighting a sense of uncertainty and struggle in

effectively conveying subject matter to students although Participant 2 echoed the initial

struggle, describing a thirst for knowledge during their early teaching years and the

pivotal role of PD in their growth. Conversely, Participant 3 offered a distinct

perspective, emphasizing adaptability and pragmatism as key factors in building PCK.

Further, Participant 4 introduced the influence of mentorship in the PCK journey,

acknowledging a mentor teacher's invaluable guidance, particularly in the realm of

writing instruction. Finally, Participant 7 shared their transformation from initial uncertainty to a deep sense of confidence and competence in teaching writing.

Participant 1 reflected on the early part of their teaching career when they encountered challenges in teaching writing. They stated, "I started trying to figure out how to teach my students how to write and it was always very much like I don't know how to get to them or how to figure this out." In this initial phase, the teacher possessed the content knowledge but found themself grappling with the pedagogical aspect of instruction and struggled with initial frustration and uncertainty in connecting with students and effectively imparting subject matter. Further, the participant also discussed their additional training, mentioning:

> When I started teaching in elementary, we did a lot of training. A couple of the trainings that I did were just really phenomenal in helping me think through how to organize writing for my students and how to do it in a way that makes sense to them so that they could transfer it to themselves.

The teacher acknowledged the transformative impact of the training, which supported the growth of their PCK. As they progressed through the training, the participant reflected on how much they grew as a teacher. Similarly, Participant 2 also mentioned struggling in the beginning stages of their teaching journey. They highlighted feeling a thirst for knowledge, as described by the speaker by saying, "I felt like I had this rush to gain as much knowledge as I could." This initial quest for knowledge emphasized the early phase of the teacher's career by conveying a sense of unpreparedness when it came to writing instruction.

Further, Participant 2 highlighted the vital role of PD in building their PCK, expressing, "Our district does PD courses, and especially your first 3 years, you do a lot of them for the district." The teacher acknowledged the district's commitment to providing PD opportunities, particularly during the crucial early years of teaching, and how they addressed their shortcomings by participating in a writing course offered by their district. They described the experience as useful and suggested that PD courses served as valuable tools for equipping the teacher with the necessary pedagogical skills.

Conversely, Participant 3 discussed their approach to building their PCK through trial and error. The teacher acknowledged that their approach to teaching writing did not fit neatly into a predefined category or formal curriculum, stating, "I don't necessarily have a name for what I do because there wasn't a class I took." This gap suggests the participants' teaching methods have evolved organically, based on their unique experiences and insights. However, the teacher also emphasized continuity in their instruction, mentioning that they continue to teach the 6+1 traits of writing, but does not always label the traits as such, but rather integrates them one at a time within an essay.

Similar to Participants 1 and 2, Participant 4 also struggled with their PCK in teaching writing. When transitioning to fourth grade, the teachers felt that their journey was significantly enriched by their partner teacher. The participant expressed they had, "a great mentor teacher on my side whose strength was writing, so I learned a lot from her." This pivotal mentorship experience underlined the teacher's proactive approach to their PD. In particular, this mentor's proficiency in writing served as a wellspring of insights, strategies, and effective practices and the collaborative learning experience exemplified

the influence of peer guidance in nurturing PCK. Rather than solely relying on formal training or coursework, the teacher underscored that they embraced the opportunity to glean practical knowledge from a mentor, reinforcing the idea that PCK can be cultivated through both formal education and collaborative learning within a teaching community.

Additionally, Participant 7 also discussed their transformative journey in the realm of education, particularly in the art of teaching writing. In their interview, they stated:

I feel very comfortable now as a professional teaching writing. I think that my experience for growing and becoming more efficient and just feeling more confident about my skills definitely came from when I went off script and did things that I knew were best for kids and felt like I tried something different and this innovative strategy worked. It was validating that I know what I'm doing.

The teacher reflected that they shifted from initial uncertainties to a profound sense of confidence and competence. Further, the teacher underscored the importance of experiential learning, daring to step *off-script* and embrace innovative strategies that prioritize the well-being and educational growth of their students. They felt that their journey of self-discovery and instructional evolution served as a testament to the dynamic nature of a teacher's development, with each experiment and triumph contributing to an ever-expanding PCK.

In conclusion, the exploration of Theme 1 offered a glimpse into the development of PCK among teachers with a focus on writing instruction. These educators expressed a struggle between the intricate balance between content knowledge and effective

pedagogy. Their narratives collectively exemplified the transformative power of experience, training, mentorship, adaptability, and a commitment to professional growth. Further, as they navigated the challenges of teaching writing, they mentioned evolving from novice instructors to seasoned educators, each embracing a dynamic and multifaceted approach to PCK development.

Theme 2

Theme 2 highlighted how teachers used their PCK to employ differentiated teaching strategies to effectively teach writing. Participant 1 elaborated on their teaching methodology rooted in the use of Step Up to Writing, where different parts of an essay are color coded to make it easier for students to understand and write, and thinking maps whereas Participant 3 used a hands-on approach, wherein they discussed guiding students through the essay-writing process. Similar to Participant 1, Participant 5 underscored the significance of organization and graphic organizers in their teaching, integrating diverse information sources, fostering discussions, and distributing graphic organizers to facilitate information structuring. In a departure from this approach, Participant 7 navigated the terrain of the standardized curriculum while infusing their lessons with AVID strategies and Step Up to Writing, scaffolding to provide vital support to students not performing at grade level. Finally, Participant 9 shared their scaffolding technique, starting with sentence starters and aligning their writing lessons with the school's reading series, illustrating the thoughtful integration of reading and writing in their pedagogy.

Participant 1 discussed their teaching methodology, which Step Up to Writing and thinking maps. They emphasized the relevance of these strategies in their instructional approach, stating:

Step Up to Writing was one of the things that we used, and I still use that today because it's a color-coded organization for students to know where they need to put topic sentences or they need to add details, transitions, and things like that. So, I teach them that whole system of organization of color-coded and then I also use this thing called thinking maps which is like graphic organizers, but it's a very specific set of them. I would use those to help them like visually organize them and then color code their organization and writing.

The participant expressed that they believed that this system guided them in teaching the placement of topic sentences, supporting details, and transitions, offering a visual framework that fostered effective organization. Additionally, they believed that the incorporation of thinking maps into their teaching repertoire supported their students highlighting that the maps served as powerful visual tools, helping students to logically structure their thoughts and ideas.

Conversely, Participant 3 discussed how they guided their students through the writing process one step at a time. They mentioned that, "One of the things that I do with the kids is I will hold their hand. Basically, we'll write an essay together talking about the major points of an essay." This participant believed that their teaching approach involved a hands-on method of guiding students through the essay-writing process. They explained how they collaborated closely with their students, essentially holding their hands as they

work together to compose essays, focusing on key aspects and major points within the essay structure.

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 5 also underlined the importance of organization and graphic organizers when teaching writing. They stated that they, "give different sources and then I'll try to get discussions going and talk about vocabulary within those articles and then [hand out] a graphic organizer."

The participant outlined their instructional strategy where they provided students with various sources of information, then initiated discussions centered around the content of those articles, with a particular focus on expanding students' vocabulary. After these preliminary steps, they distribute a graphic organizer to aid in structuring and organizing the information.

Where Participants 1 and 5 used graphic organizers, Participant 7 discussed their use of AVID strategies. However, similar to Participant 1, Participant 7 also mentioned using Step Up to Writing elements. They stated:

I had to follow a cookie-cutter curriculum for the integration of writing. Although I had to do certain components, I infused our lessons with pieces that I knew were going to be effective for students such as including the AVID strategies and Step Up to Writing scaffolding because I had many students who were not performing at grade level and I wanted to give them as much support as possible.

The participant discussed their experience with adhering to a standardized curriculum for teaching writing. Although they were required to cover specific elements outlined in the curriculum, they also mentioned that they took the initiative to enhance

their lessons by incorporating strategies they knew would benefit their students. These strategies included AVID techniques and the step-up-to-writing scaffolding method, which were particularly valuable for students struggling to perform at their grade level. The participant underscored that their primary goal was to provide these students with additional support to aid in their learning process.

In a manner similar to Participant 3, Participant 9 also employed scaffolding when teaching writing. They reflected:

We scaffold, so we would always start with a sentence starter. Students were provided either a writing prompt or then students that needed that differentiation, received fill in the blanks so they would get the sentence structure down. So that's just kind of the start of it but then lesson planning would always incorporate our reading series so when I was planning for writing the writing would always be structured around our reading for the week depending on the writing prompt so that came formally from the reading series.

The participant explained that they used scaffolding to support students in their writing development. They mentioned providing students with sentence starters to help them structure their writing. Further, they also described how their lesson planning aligned with the school's reading series.

In conclusion, Theme 2 has offered insights into how teachers effectively utilized their PCK to employ differentiated teaching strategies for writing instruction. The participants discussed their methods to provide a deeper understanding of the diverse

pedagogical approaches. The overarching thread through these interviews highlighted the participants' aim of nurturing effective writers among their students.

Research Question 2

RQ2 asked: What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing? Based on the research question, three themes emerged. I organized this section according to the two identified themes.

- Theme 3: Teachers believed that the more time they taught writing, the more confidence they gained in teaching writing.

- Theme 4: Teachers believed they faced numerous struggles in teaching writing.

To answer RQ2, I asked participants to discuss their perceptions of confidence in teaching writing. The participants responded to the interview questions that framed RQ2 and identified six themes based on their experiences teaching writing. Figure 2 shows RQ2 and the two related themes.

Figure 2

Themes Related to RQ2
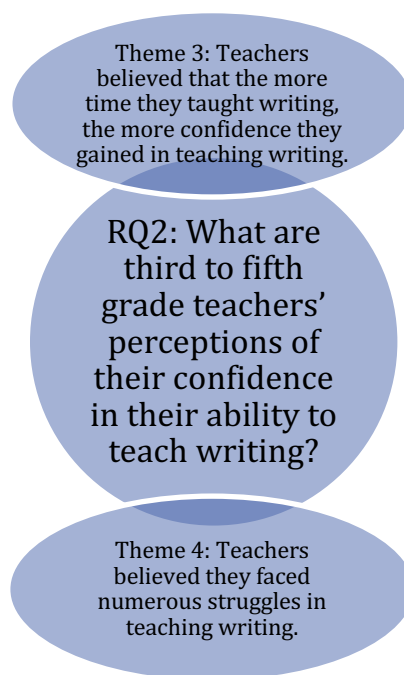
To answer RQ2, I asked participants to discuss their perceptions of confidence in teaching writing. The participants responded to the interview questions that framed RQ2 and identified two themes based on their experiences teaching writing (see Figure 2).

Theme 3

In Theme 3, the participants articulated that the more time they spent teaching writing, the more confident they became in their abilities. Participants expressed their initial uncertainty in teaching writing, but highlighted that by acquiring diverse methods and strategies, they gradually developed confidence and now feel at ease when working with students. Participant 2 discussed their growth and development stating, "That's definitely something I've had to grow into I feel comfortable." Similarly, Participant 7

expressed a high level of confidence in teaching writing expressing that they now, "feel very comfortable now as a professional teaching writing." They attributed this confidence to their knowledge of different approaches and methods. On the whole, although the participants initially experienced uncertainty and a lack confidence, through time and experience, they felt that they gained more confidence in their ability to effectively teach writing.

Participant 1 reflected on their initial lack of knowledge and training in teaching writing mentioning feeling uncertain about their abilities. However, through the process of learning different methods and strategies, they felt that they gained confidence and now feel more comfortable working with students. In terms of supporting students, Participant 1 also expressed that they can now identify areas where students are struggling and help them overcome those challenges:

> When I first started, I had no idea what I was doing, and nobody ever taught me how to write. Then, through learning all these methods and these strategies, I feel so much more comfortable now like. I feel like I can sit down with any kid and see what areas they're struggling in and help them figure that out and then get to the point where they're ready to write.

Comparably, Participant 2 also expressed that they had to work on becoming comfortable in their role. Although they did not consider themselves an expert in writing, they feel confident in their ability to do a good job. Despite not knowing "everything," Participant 2 stated:

That's definitely something I've had to grow into. I feel comfortable now. I feel like I don't know everything or am the expert, but I do feel confident that I do a pretty good job, especially at the 3rd grade level.

Participants 2 and 3 shared some similarities in their initial feelings of uncertainty and lack of training in teaching writing. Both participants expressed a sense of discomfort or lack of confidence in their abilities as writing instructors, although Participant 3 expressed a lack of personal skills as a writer. They both discussed feeling uncertain about alternative approaches beyond the 6 + 1 traits framework and indicated that the existing methods may not work for all students. Participant 3 discussed having reservations about their effectiveness in teaching writing:

I am okay, but I'm uncomfortable teaching writing because I don't think I have I have the skills to be a writer. What I'm doing works for some kids, but I don't know how else to do it. I don't remember ever being taught that besides the 6 + 1 traits and even those sometimes those don't work for all of the kids.

In a different pattern, Participant 7 expressed a high level of confidence in their ability to teach writing. They attributed this confidence to their knowledge of various curricula and strategies for approaching writing instruction. Emphasizing their belief in the importance of differentiating their approach for each student, even in a large classroom Participant 7 articulated:

I'm very confident now and that's a result of knowing different kinds of curricula and knowing different types of strategies to approach with students in writing. I use different ways or perspectives. I guess you could say to approach it [writing]

for each student because even with a class of 32, I think it was important that I model differentiation for their instruction in writing.

In conclusion, Theme 3 highlighted the journey of the participants in gaining confidence and expertise in teaching writing. Initially, the participants expressed their perceived lack of confidence, in teaching writing, but then became more comfortable and confident over time. Participant 7 exemplified a high level of confidence, attributing it to their knowledge of various curricula and strategies, as well as their commitment to differentiating instruction. Overall, Theme 3 underscored the participants belief in their shared experience in the transformative journey from uncertainty to confidence in teaching writing, fueled by continuous learning and practical experience.

Theme 4

In Theme 4, Participants 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8 expressed various struggles with student accommodations and needs when teaching writing. All participants discussed challenges related to student motivation, basic writing skills, grammar, creativity, relevance, and engagement with writing topics. Further, Participants 1, 7, and 8 highlighted difficulties motivating students to write about topics that don't align with their interests. Participant 7 expressed that, "The writing prompts were not meaningful, not relevant, which we all know that's what kids need to be able to be excited about something." Similarly, Participant 2 discussed gradually increasing writing duration to build stamina, whereas Participants 4 and 6 observed that many students lacked basic writing abilities and focused on teaching them how to construct sentences before moving on to paragraphs. Participant 4 went on to state, "At the beginning of the year because we

could not handle paragraphs so we would do sentences." Fundamentally, the findings of Theme 4 revealed a range of challenges in teaching writing,

Participant 1 highlighted the challenge of motivating students to write, especially when the topics are not aligned with their interests. In terms of supporting student' interests, they emphasized the importance of flexibility in writing assignments. The teachers expressed that students struggled when they had to write about subjects they find uninteresting, such as scientific topics like cell theory:

> I would say my biggest struggle with students it's just getting them motivated to write. I'm lucky that I can have a lot of flexibility, and like learning what their interests are, and then being able to write about those things. If it's something they're not interested in and it's something they have to write on like if they're in a science class and they have to write about the cell theory, and they're just like not interested in it that's a real struggle for them to sit down and write about it.

Further, Participant 2 reflected on their struggles every August in getting the students to write recalling discussions about the importance of encouraging the children to write more. To address this, they implemented a strategy where the children were asked to engage in one-minute writing sessions, aiming to write as many words as possible within that time frame. The duration was gradually increased, and the ultimate goal was for the children to reach a point where they could write continuously for a full 15 minutes without interruption. The participant mentioned:

> In August they couldn't even remember how to write their names. I remember a lot of talk about pushing the kids to write more, so we'll do a one-minute write—

just write as many words as you can for one minute, and then bump it up to five minutes, and then celebrate when the kids can write for a whole 15 minutes without stopping. [It is] just those little things to increase stamina for writing that really stuck with me because I was focused on the quality of writing.

During their interview, Participant 4 shared insights on their students' writing abilities. They observed that some children lacked basic sentence construction skills and were not performing at the expected grade level and consequently adopted an approach that prioritized teaching sentence-writing over paragraphs. They introduced various sentence types and writing conventions, allowing the students to practice them. Once the students became proficient in constructing sentences, the focus shifted toward developing paragraphs. Participant 4 mentioned they would guide the writing process by providing a framework or outline for the students to follow:

Our kids were not the highest when it came to writing. They were not at a 4th grade level. We would get them and notice that they didn't even know how to write a sentence. So, we would actually start with just sentences at the beginning of the year because we could not handle paragraphs. We would do different types of sentences, and punctuation, and then we would move to just paragraphs. We would do one a week: an informative, a personal, the three different ones because we were supposed to do three of them. That took us to about October, and then we would start paragraphs. We'd start to write multiple paragraphs. A lot of it was me writing and having them fill in the blank because we struggled when I gave

them that freedom, so trying to learn how to write the thesis and the three things

you're going to talk about are your actual paragraphs was really hard for them.

Participant 6 shared Participant 4's observations regarding the challenges they

encountered while working with students including difficulties with basic grammar rules,

including the use of capitals. Participant 6 mentioned instances where the students would

turn in essays all in lowercase:

> [They] struggled with just grammar and basic knowledge of writing capitals.
> They'll say, 'This is my sloppy copy.' It's the lowercase I all the way through it
> all and these are fifth graders and I'm and I'm thinking, what happened? The stuff
> that really stops me from being able to read their writing is when I'm choking on
> easily remedied grammatical errors, so there needs to be a stronger base, I think
> maybe when they're younger so that they're not sitting there trying to figure out
> how to answer that question.

Alternately, Participant 7 discussed the challenges they faced in fostering

creativity and spontaneity in their writing instruction mentioning feeling restricted by

numerous requirements that were beyond their control, which was particularly frustrating

for an experienced teacher. The participant also recognized the need for a more hands-on

and relevant approach to engage the students:

> It was difficult to be creative or spontaneous in teaching writing because there are
> many things that I was required to do that were outside of my locus of control and
> being a veteran teacher especially it felt very restrictive. They [the students]
> needed something that was more hands-on that was more relevant, and the writing

prompts were, let's just say, not meaningful, not relevant which we all know kids need to be able to be excited about something, to be passionate, and to find relevance.

Additionally, Participant 8 discussed the challenge of finding engaging topics for writing, particularly considering that state testing topics are often uninspiring. To prepare students for these testing topics, they emphasized the need to prepare students by initially exploring enjoyable and interesting writing subjects. The participant stated:

Finding engaging things to write about because, let's face it, state testing is not engaging. So, you have to prepare them by doing the fun stuff on things we enjoy writing about, and then saying, 'Oh you know what we got to introduce rigor now so now I'm going to give you a very boring topic to write about because you also need to know how to persevere through this.'

Throughout Theme 4, findings indicated that the participants faced issues related to student motivation, basic writing skills, grammar, creativity, relevance, and engagement with writing topics. Several participants emphasized the challenge of motivating students to write about topics that didn't align with their interests, underscoring the importance of meaningful and relevant writing prompts. However, strategies such as gradually increasing writing duration to build stamina and focusing on teaching sentence construction before paragraphs were highlighted as effective approaches. Further, participants also noted the need for stronger foundations in grammar and capitalization rules, as well as the importance of fostering creativity, spontaneity, and hands-on learning experiences to engage students.

Research Question 3

RQ3 asked: How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing? Based on the research question, two themes emerged:

- Theme 5: Teachers believed they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs.

- Theme 6: Teachers believed they received writing pedagogy during PD but desired more training.

To answer RQ3, I asked participants about writing pedagogy courses in their teacher preparation program and about mentoring and PD once they were in the classroom. Participants' responses reflected their perceptions and experiences of a lack of training to teach writing in the classroom. Their responses also highlighted a combined desire for ongoing PD and support to more effectively teach writing.

Figure 3

Themes Related to RQ3

Theme 5: Teachers believed they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs.

RQ 3: How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?
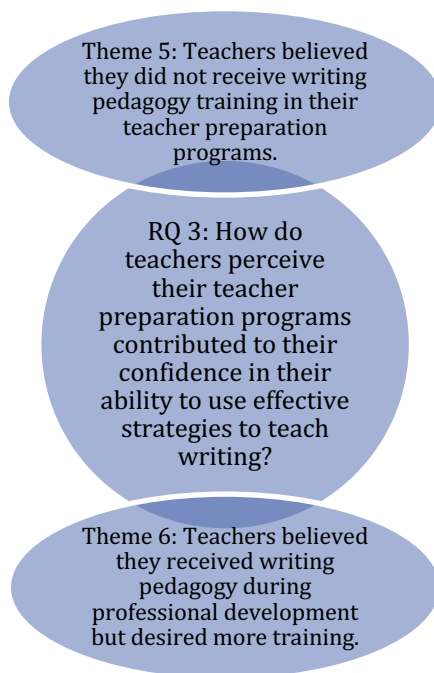
Theme 6: Teachers believed they received writing pedagogy during professional development but desired more training.

Theme 5

In Theme 5 participants believe that they did not receive sufficient writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs. Participant 1 expressed, "I don't feel like I was ever prepared in my teacher preparation program." They mentioned feeling a strong sense of unpreparedness, describing a lack of structure and guidance in their writing process. Similarly, Participant 2 recalled a lack of "explicit instruction in teaching writing" and instead relied on reading and picture books. Participant 4 highlighted the absence of a dedicated writing class and a predominant focus on literacy development where they were taught how to teach reading, but not how to teach writing. Participant 9 struggled to recall specific writing instructions but mentioned notebooking as a suggested

practice. These accounts collectively emphasized the need for comprehensive and explicit training in writing instruction within teacher programs.

Participant 1 expressed a profound sense of unpreparedness in their teacher programs regarding writing instruction. They believed that their dissatisfaction stemmed from a lack of clarity and coherence in their writing process, indicating a disconnection between the teaching they received and their understanding of effective writing. The participant's experience of "whatever came out, came out" suggested a perceived lack of structure and guidance in their approach to writing:

> I don't feel like I was ever prepared in my teacher programs. I don't know that I ever learned in my schooling how to write in a way that made sense to me. I feel like there were many times when I would just sit down and write a paper and it was like whatever came out, came out.

Participant 2 reflected on their bachelor's degree in teaching and articulated a lack of instruction on how to teach writing. In their interview, they mentioned, "I don't remember learning how to teach writing." Instead, their memories revolved around learning through reading or using picture books, suggesting an indirect or incidental approach to writing instruction, stating, "I don't really remember learning how to teach writing for my bachelor's [degree]. I think it was more through reading or through picture books or connected to something. I don't really remember."

Participant 4 also ruminated on their experience in their teacher program, specifically highlighting the absence of a dedicated writing class. During the interview, they recalled a literacy class that primarily focused on reading and the development of

literacy skills. They felt that although writing was incorporated through papers related to literacy development, they could not recall a specific class dedicated solely to writing instruction:

> I don't remember just a writing class. We had a literacy class, and that one was more about reading and how we develop literacy. We had to write literacy development from zero to five and then the second semester we combined it with six to 12 and stayed in like the elementary school age. We had papers, but I don't remember a specific writing class.

Participant 9 also discussed their experience in a teacher preparation program, When prompted, they communicated, "If writing instruction existed, it was likely integrated with the reading curriculum." However, the participant did recall notebooking being suggested as a best practice, which they believed indicated some form of emphasis on writing.

In conclusion, the participants' believed their experiences and perspectives highlighted a shared sentiment that they did not receive sufficient writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs. The accounts revealed a perceived lack of explicit instruction and dedicated classes focused on teaching writing. Instead, participants recalled reliance on incidental or integrated approaches to writing instruction, with limited emphasis on effective writing strategies.

Theme 6

Findings revealed that many of the teachers believed that they received writing pedagogy during PD but desired more training. Participant 1 emphasized the role of

assistance and encouragement in preventing teacher burnout and fostering job

satisfaction, whereas Participant 2 shared their experience of feeling unprepared early in

their career and expressed a continued hunger for learning and improvement. Similarly,

Participant 3 emphasized the need for dedicated classes on teaching writing

fundamentals, but Participant 9 underscored the significance of comprehensive

observations and accountability.

Participant 1 highlighted the importance of PD and having people who can

provide assistance and encouragement along the way, stating:

Teacher burnout is huge, and if you don't have people helping you and pushing

you along the way, then it can be...that's how we lose teachers because they don't

want to stick around, and they're not getting the support that they need.

This perspective highlighted Participant 1's belief in the crucial role of ongoing

support and mentorship in retaining teachers and preventing burnout. In terms of PD, the

participant also stressed the need for continuous training in writing pedagogy to better

equip teachers with the necessary skills and resources to effectively teach writing.

Addressing this training gap, Participant 1 believed that by providing ongoing support,

education systems can better support teachers and create an environment that encourages

professional growth and job satisfaction.

Likewise, Participant 2 shared their experience with PD courses offered by their

district, particularly during the first three years of teaching. Regarding ongoing PD, they

reflected, "I feel like now I'm OK, I would still surely take a class if I was offered, but

you know I guess I was hungry to learn about writing early on and definitely didn't feel

super prepared." Their perspective highlighted the recognition that continuous learning and development are essential in the teaching profession. Moreover, although the participant mentioned feeling more confident in their writing instruction abilities, they still expressed a willingness to engage in further training.

Similarly, in terms of PD, Participant 3 expressed a desire for specific classes dedicated to teaching students the fundamentals of writing, such as essay composition or constructing paragraphs. During their interview, they mentioned, "I would love to have a class on teaching students to write essays or even teaching students to write paragraphs like what's necessary." Emphasizing the need for comprehensive instruction, the participant suggested that the training could be broken down into multiple classes based on individual preferences. Stressing the importance of understanding the basics, they also mentioned a need to watch the sequential steps involved in guiding students from the initial point to the outcome of a particular type of writing being modeled.

On a different thread, Participant 9 expressed the belief that teachers should be held more accountable and that formal observations play a significant role in PD. On the topic they stated, "I definitely feel that teachers need to be held a little bit more accountable. I feel that when we have our observations, our formal observations." In this regard, Participant 9 emphasized the importance of comprehensive observations during final evaluations and the entire teaching process expressing a desire for administrators or other qualified individuals to regularly observe their teaching practices, including practices during practice sessions They continued, "I want you [administration] to come to watch every game, not just my final game. I want you to come and watch my practice

and my practicing the right way." They reported feeling this view highlighted the value of critical feedback from these administrators and believed that it would help teachers become more effective in the classroom.

In conclusion, the perspectives shared by Participants 1, 2, 3, and 9 shed light on the perceived significance of PD and ongoing support in the teaching profession. They underscored their combined desire for ongoing PD, particularly in writing pedagogy. In terms of growth and teacher retention, their perspectives also emphasized the vital role of ongoing support, mentorship, and opportunities.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the research study findings based on the data collection and analysis that answered the two research questions. The data I collected and coded included two emergent themes for RQ1, three emergent themes for RQ2, and three emergent themes for RQ3. Table 5 contains the six themes developed and reflected in the overall results.

Table 5

Six Themes Developed and Reflected in Overall Results

Number	Theme
1	Teacher developed their PCK through experience and training.
2	Teachers used their PCK to employ differentiated teaching strategies to effectively teach writing.
3	Teachers believed they faced numerous struggles in teaching writing.
4	Teachers believed that the more time they taught writing, the more confidence they gained in teaching writing.
5	Teachers believed they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs.
6	Teachers believed they received writing pedagogy during PD but desired more training.

This study examined the perceptions of teachers regarding their confidence and training in teaching writing. The results highlighted a paucity of writing pedagogy courses in their teacher preparation program and also highlighted that although some teachers received mentoring in the classroom, there was a perceived gap in writing training, despite participating in PD sessions. As a result, the teachers expressed a strong desire for further training opportunities to enhance their expertise in teaching writing. In Chapter 5, I discuss the purpose of the study, interpretations of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and suggestions for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in writing instruction and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing. I conducted this study to address a gap in the literature regarding third- to fifth-grade teachers' training in teaching writing and their confidence in their ability to teach writing. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was based on Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Shulman's (1986) PCK model. I conducted nine interviews with K–12 teachers who had experience teaching writing to third- to fifth-grade students. After transcribing the interview data, I checked the transcripts with the recordings to ensure accuracy. I employed reflective journaling to address potential researcher bias while interpreting participants' responses.

In this chapter, I interpret the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. I also discuss the implications of the findings in relation to each research question. This chapter also includes a discussion of the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and the implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

Through an analysis of the data collected in my study, I identified six themes regarding third- to fifth-grade teachers' confidence in teaching writing. In the following sections, I describe the alignment between the research questions and the identified themes. I also relate the findings to the conceptual framework and current literature. The six themes were the following:

1. Teachers developed their PCK through experience and training.

2. Teachers used their PCK to employ differentiated teaching strategies to effectively teach writing.

3. Teachers believed they faced numerous struggles in teaching writing.

4. Teachers believed that the more time they taught writing, the more confidence they gained in teaching writing.

5. Teachers believed they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their teacher preparation programs.

6. Teachers believed they received writing pedagogy during PD but desired more training.

The findings demonstrated that although the teachers believed that they developed more confidence in teaching writing the longer they were in the classroom, there was a lack of writing pedagogy training in their TPPs. Studies indicated that third- to fifth-grade teachers do not receive adequate training in writing pedagogy in their TPPs (Sanders et al., 2020). Studies also found that only one fourth of TPPs offer courses in writing pedagogy (Sanders et al., 2020). Bandura (1977) posited that an individual's beliefs and perception of their ability to complete a task play a significant role. Shulman (1986) emphasized that possessing knowledge of how to teach is as important as having knowledge of the subject matter being taught.

Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

In addressing RQ1, I focused on third- to fifth-grade teachers' perceptions of their PCK of teaching writing. Based on the data analysis, three findings emerged. The key findings outlined for RQ1 highlight the pedagogical strategies teachers use to teach writing.

Finding 1: Through Experience and Training, Teachers Developed their PCK

The first finding of the study emerged from Theme 1. PCK is a crucial aspect of effective teaching that creates meaningful learning experiences for students (Barendsen & Henze, 2019). As teachers had more experience and training, their PCK grew. One of the ways this occurred was through targeted PD. For all of the participants, PD played an important part in their growth as a teacher. This assertion aligns with research by Deane (2018) that found PD courses, especially during the early years of teaching, provided teachers with valuable pedagogical skills and tools to address their initial shortcomings.

It is also important to note that adaptability and pragmatism were also key factors for the teachers in building their PCK. When the teachers stepped away from the predefined curriculum, and designed lessons more targeted to their students' needs, their teaching methods evolved more organically. This approach suggests that PCK can be developed through experiential learning and the ability to adapt to the needs of students. This conclusion aligns with research by Shi and Baker (2022) who found the importance of experiential learning, innovation, and the willingness to try different strategies.

The narratives of these participants in Theme 1 shed light on the development of PCK among teachers, particularly in the context of teaching writing. They collectively demonstrate that the journey from novice to seasoned educator involves a balance between content knowledge and effective pedagogy. Therefore, experience, training, adaptability, and a commitment to professional growth play crucial roles in shaping a teacher's PCK..

Finding 2: Teachers Employed Diverse Instructional Strategies to Facilitate Writing Instruction

The second finding from the study emerged from Theme 2 and supported that teachers used various strategies to engage students in writing instruction. Writing is a fundamental skill that is crucial to a student's academic and personal development. This assertion supported Graham (2021), who found that writing facilitates learning by helping students explore, clarify, and think deeply about the ideas and concepts they encounter. To foster competent writers, educators seek effective strategies and practices that engage and support students in their writing journey. One similarity observed among the current participants was the use of organizational tools to scaffold students' writing process such as the Step Up to Writing, AVID, and thinking maps. These tools not only provided clarity but also empowered students to effectively arrange their writing pieces.

Moreover, flexibility and student choice emerged as key in the teachers' strategies. This assertion is supported by Schrodt et al. (2019) who highlighted that teachers who employed an apprentice approach to teaching writing noticed more student success. This freedom is important to student agency and growth in writing. Findings from a study by Reid and Moses (2020) suggested that students were more successful when they set goals for themselves. When giving students freedom, the teachers in the current study noted that their students had more control over what they were learning and were more willing to engage with the material.

Additionally, some of the teachers used a cross-curricular approach to engage students. One participant showcased a creative and immersive cross-curricular approach to social studies and writing. Such engaging techniques highlighted the interconnectedness of writing and historical comprehension, sparking students' interest and investment in their writing.

Current participants also demonstrated a willingness to work closely with struggling students. These teachers engaged in tiered intervention and offered individual support, enabling them to specifically target areas of improvement. Hwang et al. (2022) demonstrated that when teachers tailor interventions, students show more signs of progress. Teachers in my study noted that personalized attention bolstered students' confidence and progress in writing.

This finding addresses the strategies and practices employed by educators to elevate writing instruction. Organizational tools, guided discussions, integration of sources, rubrics, individualized support, alignment with standards, and cross-curricular

approaches contributed to enhancing students' writing skills. The teachers in my study reported that there was value in cultivating confident and skilled writers and using innovative techniques to foster a passion for writing in their students.

In addressing RQ2, I focused on third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing. Based on the research question, three findings emerged. The key findings outlined for RQ2 highlight teachers' confidence in their ability to teach writing and the challenges they face.

Finding 3: Teachers Became More Confident the Longer They Taught Writing

The third finding emerged from Theme 3 and underscored that teachers' confidence increased with experience and time spent teaching writing. Initially, the teachers expressed uncertainty and a lack of confidence in their abilities to teach writing. However, as they adopted diverse methods and strategies and gained more experience, they developed confidence and felt more at ease when working with students. A study by Khalid and Husnin (2019) revealed a positive correlation between experience and confidence in effectively teaching writing as teachers evolved from initial uncertainty to a sense of ease and proficiency through the acquisition of diverse methods and strategies.

In the current study, the teachers' experiences in teaching writing demonstrated a pattern of increased confidence over time. Additionally, teachers mentioned that the longer they taught writing and the more practical experience they gained, the more they were at ease as writing instructors. These results are supported by Regier (2021) who found that the more teachers developed their skills, the more confident they became. This finding also reflects the theoretical perspective of Bandura (1977), who asserted that

practice enhances confidence. Further, this finding suggests that teaching writing is a skill that can be developed and improved with time and practice.

My study also revealed that as the teachers became more confident in their ability to teach writing, they were better able to support their students. Participants reported being able to identify areas where students were struggling and help them overcome writing challenges. This finding is consistent with a study by McCarthey and Woodard (2018) who found that teachers who felt confident enough to adapt the mandated curriculum to meet the needs of their students saw greater student success. As a result, it could be argued that increased teacher confidence positively impacts student support and learning outcomes in writing. This finding also demonstrated the significant role of experience in shaping teachers' confidence in teaching writing. The longer teachers taught, the more capable and assured they felt in their role as writing instructors as they acquired diverse methods, strategies, and a deeper understanding of their students' needs. In summary, the study underscored the crucial impact of experience on teachers' confidence in the discipline of writing instruction, with an evident transformation from uncertainty to increased capabilities and a deeper understanding of students' needs.

Finding 4: Teachers Perceived a Multitude of Challenges in Teaching Writing

The fourth finding emerged from Theme 4 and revealed a series of challenges encountered by the teachers in teaching writing, such as basic writing skills and student motivation. Studies by Miller et al. (2018) and Schrodt et al. (2019) demonstrated similar results in which students who were less motivated were less successful. These studies

revealed the obstacles faced by educators in their efforts to enhance students' writing abilities.

A significant concern raised by current participants was the lack of basic writing skills among their students. Teachers mentioned that students struggled with basic grammar rules, including the use of capitals, which hindered the clarity and readability of their writing. Similarly, Miller et al. (2018) and Paulick et al. (2019) found that building a stronger foundation in grammar and mechanics was deemed essential to improving students' writing proficiency. Teachers in my study mentioned needing to reteach conventions and sentence construction before progressing to paragraphs and essays.

In addition to the challenges related to basic writing skills, teachers in my study expressed concerns about student motivation in writing. Participants highlighted difficulties in inspiring students to engage in writing, especially when the topics provided did not resonate with their interests. Miller et al. (2018) and Schrodt et al. (2019) found that students were more engaged when the material was relevant to them. The teachers in my study also mentioned that the uninspiring nature of state testing topics was a particular challenge because students were required to persevere through writing tasks despite their lack of personal interest in the given subjects. In conclusion, this finding highlighted the multifaceted challenges teachers encounter in teaching writing. From grappling with students' basic writing skills, such as grammar and capitalization, to the continuous effort needed to motivate students, the teachers revealed the intricacies of fostering writing proficiency in their classrooms.

For RQ3, I focused on how teachers perceived their TPPs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing. I identified two themes central to this question. The key findings emerging from each theme underscore the importance of TPPs to prepare teachers for the classroom.

Finding 5: Teachers Believed They Received Inadequate Writing Pedagogy Training During Their Teacher Preparation Programs

The fifth key finding emerged from Theme 5 and supported that teachers believed they received inadequate writing pedagogy training during their TPPs. Effective writing instruction is vital to a well-rounded education, empowering preservice teachers to express their ideas coherently and creatively (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018). This finding is supported by Sanders et al. (2020) who found that preservice teachers' abilities to teach writing effectively are often influenced by the training they receive during their TPPs. Von Hippel and Bellows (2018) found that policymakers have long blamed TPPs for not better preparing preservice teachers to teach reading and writing. This finding may be underscored by standardized test scores. Conversely, Cho et al. (2019) found that TPPs equip preservice teachers with the skills needed to better serve their students.

A prevailing concern among my participants was that although their TPPs provided teacher training, there was a lack of dedicated writing classes in their TPPs. Instead of receiving specialized instruction in writing, some teachers recalled learning about teaching writing through indirect or incidental approaches. This discovery aligns with Kohnen's (2019) findings, which revealed that certain TPPs offered preservice teachers only a restricted perspective on classroom writing instruction. Further, the data

obtained from the current participants' experiences supports Sanders et al.'s (2020) findings that only one fourth of TPPs offered writing pedagogy courses for preservice teachers.

Current participants further noted that their TPPs emphasized literacy development over writing instruction. Although literacy development is important, the teachers' accounts revealed that writing was often relegated to a secondary role, with minimal emphasis on specific writing strategies. This finding corroborates the results of Boche et al. (2021), which indicated that numerous TPPs provided methods and pedagogy courses for the primary subject areas (math, literacy, science, and social studies), but the content did not align with the teaching practices in schools.

This finding underscores the significance of effective writing pedagogy training in TPPs. Current participants' dissatisfaction with their writing instruction preparation revealed the need for comprehensive and explicit training to develop their abilities as writing educators. A lack of dedicated writing classes and a limited emphasis on writing instruction compounded the challenges teachers faced in this domain.

Finding 6: Teachers Expressed a Need for Additional and More Comprehensive Training

The sixth key finding of my study emerged from Theme was that teachers expressed a need for additional training. The teachers emphasized the importance of continuous learning and improvement in the teaching profession. They communicated a hunger for ongoing PD to enhance their teaching skills and effectiveness. This result is

supported by Svendsen (2020) who found that PD enhanced teachers' abilities and knowledge.

Teachers in this study also conveyed a need for additional comprehensive training in writing pedagogy, specifically focused on teaching writing fundamentals, such as essay composition and paragraph construction. Although some teachers had received PD in this area, they expressed a desire for further training to better equip themselves with the necessary skills and resources for teaching writing effectively. This finding reflects Shulman's (1986) theory that asserted teachers need both knowledge of the subject being taught and experience in teaching the subject.

Further, the teachers collectively emphasized their commitment to ongoing growth and improvement as teachers. They believed that continuous PD and support were essential components of their journey as educators. Moreover, a study by Khan et al. (2019) found that continuous PD enhanced teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Similarly, Evens et al. (2018) found that PD in writing pedagogy helped teachers better grow their writing skills. Thus, my study supports the findings in these studies that teachers believe that continuous PD is pivotal in nurturing effective and skilled educators.

In summary, the key takeaways from this finding highlighted the teachers' strong desire for continuous learning and comprehensive training, particularly in writing pedagogy. They valued ongoing support, mentorship, and critical feedback to improve their instructional practices and foster job satisfaction. Consequently, these insights provided by the teachers underscored the importance of investing in PD and opportunities to support teachers' growth and effectiveness in the classroom.

Limitations of the Study

As I analyzed the findings of this qualitative study, I identified four key limitations that warrant consideration: sample size, inclusion criteria, participant self-selection, and potential researcher bias. I used a small sample size including nine teachers located in Arizona, Nebraska, and Washington who taught grades three to five. Sample size and inclusion criteria could limit the transferability of the study. In terms of inclusion criteria for participation called for third to fifth grade teachers who had completed a teacher preparation program, have teaching credentials, and have experience teaching third, fourth, or fifth grade for at least 2 years. The participants were volunteers and opted in through self-selection. Research bias was the final limitation of the study. My experiences with writing and teaching writing based on my personal views were taken into consideration when conducting the interviews. To address this potential bias, reflective journaling techniques were employed to ensure a clear distinction between the researcher's own perceptions and interpretations of the participants' responses.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

Writing is a fundamental skill that holds significant importance for a student's academic and personal development. Teachers are responsible for equipping students with the necessary tools and techniques to excel in this essential domain (see Graham, 2021). To do this, teachers must have access to comprehensive TPPs that offer writing pedagogy classes and mentorship. They also need access to PD once they enter the classroom.

The first recommendation is to include writing pedagogy courses in TPPs. Recognizing the significance of comprehensive writing pedagogy training during teacher preparation programs is crucial in enhancing writing instruction. Therefore, the inclusion of writing pedagogy courses into all TPPs is vital to offering dedicated writing instruction courses that emphasize effective teaching practices and writing strategies (see Sanders et al., 2020). This recommendation is supported by Ciampa and Gallagher (2018), who found in their study that by providing preservice teachers with robust training in writing instruction, universities can better equip them to handle the complexities of teaching writing in their future classrooms. This step, in turn, will enable teachers to instill a love for writing among their students from the outset.

The second recommendation is to support continuous learning once teachers are in the classroom. Promoting a growth mindset among teachers is essential in fostering a culture of continuous learning and development. Saglam-Arslan et al. (2022) found that by advocating for continuous PD opportunities that address teachers' evolving needs and align with current research and best practices in writing instruction, schools can ensure that educators stay informed and up to date with the latest advancements. This recommendation is supported by Mosley et al. (2022), who discovered that continuous learning through ongoing PD is a cornerstone of effective teaching. By supporting teachers' growth and effectiveness, mentorship and PD create a positive ripple effect, benefiting both teachers and their students.

In summary, writing skills are vital for students' academic and personal development. To equip preservice and practicing teachers with the necessary expertise,

access to comprehensive TPPs that include dedicated writing pedagogy courses and support continuous learning and PD for teachers is equally crucial. Therefore, the implementation of these recommendations holds the potential to elevate writing instruction to new heights by empowering teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge ensuring they can guide students towards becoming confident and skilled writers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Effective writing instruction is a critical aspect of a well-rounded education, and teachers play a pivotal role in fostering students' writing skills and confidence. To ensure students' success in writing, it is essential to understand the factors that contribute to effective writing instruction (see Graham, 2021). Therefore, this topic requires further investigation in various areas to gain valuable insights into the effect of teacher confidence, training, and support on students' writing development. Some suggestions include:

- A longitudinal study of teacher confidence and experience that tracks the confidence levels of teachers in teaching writing over an extended period

- An exploration of the role of mentorship for novice teachers to examine how mentoring support during the first year of teaching affects teachers' confidence, skill development, and preparedness for teaching writing

- Additional research on the long-term effects of comprehensive training that explores how continuous PD impacts teacher confidence, instructional practices, and student achievement over time

- Qualitative research focusing on assessing the influence of writing pedagogy training which compares the outcomes of teachers who received specialized training in writing instruction with those who did not

In conclusion, effective writing instruction is undeniably vital for a comprehensive education, and teachers hold the key to fostering students' writing skills and confidence. To ensure continued progress in this critical domain, further exploration and research are essential. Thus, by gaining valuable insights from these studies, we can potentially better equip educators with the knowledge and support they need to provide effective writing instruction, ultimately empowering students to succeed in their writing endeavors and thrive academically and personally.

Implications for Social Change

Walden University promotes and values positive social change. This study on third to fifth grade teachers' training and confidence in teaching writing contributes meaning and may promote positive social changes in teaching and learning. This study establishes a link between third to fifth grade teachers' confidence and their training. The information gained from this study adds invaluable insight into better preparing preservice teachers. Further, the results of this study also highlight the importance of ongoing mentoring, PD, and training in writing and writing pedagogy once a teacher enters the classroom.

The potential reach of the findings could be of considerable influence within TPPs and school districts and other organizations to promote this change within their institutions. The information gained from this study could support and contribute to

positive social change in TPPs by encouraging the inclusion of writing pedagogy courses that would better prepare teacher candidates for the classroom. The results of this study could also support teachers and students by suggesting school districts provide targeted mentoring and PD on writing and teaching writing.

Conclusion

Writing pedagogy courses and ongoing PD are essential for teachers to be effective in the classroom. This study explored third to fifth grade teachers' training and their perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing. The conceptual framework that grounded this study included Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Shulman's (1986) pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) model. The participants shared valuable insights based on their experience and perceptions that will inform the field of education on the importance of writing pedagogy courses in TPPs and in PD.

Many researchers have argued that writing pedagogy courses and continuing PD are essential for teachers to hone their skills and to build confidence (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2021; Graham, 2021; Sanders et al., 2020). Researchers have also argued that the more confident a teacher is, the more effective they are in the classroom (Hennessy et al., 2021). Notably, the participants of the study indicated that they did not receive writing pedagogy training in their TPPs. Further, the participants reported that mentoring, PD, and additional training enhanced their knowledge, ability, and confidence. The findings present alignment with the recommendations of Sanders et al. (2020), who reasoned that all TPPs should provide writing pedagogy courses. Further, Deane (2018) asserted that PD is essential to teacher success. This study provides colleges, the field of

education, administrators, and PD coordinators with an opportunity to reevaluate TPPs

and PD curricula to better serve educators and students.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

[Read to participant] Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. This study is focused on exploring third to fifth grade teacher views of their ability to teach writing. The results of this study will potentially provide more understanding regarding teacher experience in writing instruction. All responses are kept confidential, which means the study will not identify you as a participant. The information you provide today will be kept confidential and secured in a safe place for five years, at which point the information will then be destroyed. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, and you may end the interview at any time. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be recorded with your consent. Do you have any questions about what I just explained? Do you consent to being recorded? [Turn on the Zoom recording and begin the interview.]

Name of Person Interviewed: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Video Platform: _____

	Background Information/Demographics
	Prompt: [Please share with me about your teaching background.]
1	What grade do you currently teach?
2	How long have you been teaching?
3	How do you decide how much time you spend teaching writing in your classroom?
	RQ1: What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching writing?
4	How do you teach writing in your classroom?
5	What strategies do you use to teach writing?
	RQ 2: What are third to fifth grade teachers' perceptions of their confidence in their ability to teach writing?
6	How comfortable are you in teaching writing?
7	What makes you feel more comfortable about teaching writing? Please give reasons for your answer.
8	How comfortable are you teaching writing in other subjects?
9	What, if any, struggles do you face in teaching writing?
	RQ 3: How do teachers perceive their teacher preparation programs contributed to their confidence in their ability to use effective strategies to teach writing?

10	What writing pedagogy courses did your teacher preparation program offer?
11	How well do you believe your teacher preparation program prepared you for teaching writing?
12	What effective writing instruction strategies did your teacher preparation program provide?
13	Is there anything else you would like to share?

Closing Statement: Thank you for taking time to meet with me today. You have given me insight into your training to teach writing and your perceptions of your confidence in teaching writing.
Follow-up Statement: Over the next few weeks, I will be transcribing this interview and will email you to complete the member checking process and ask any clarification questions, with a limit of no more than five questions. If you think of anything else that you would like to add, you may do so when I send the follow-up email to you. Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions. I sincerely appreciate your time and willingness to share with me today and allowing me to use your expertise to inform the field of education on this important study.

Appendix B: Study Flyer

Interview study seeks third to fifth grade teachers who teach writing.

There is a new study exploring teacher confidence and training in teaching writing that could help administrators, and professional development coordinators to better understand and support teachers. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences in your teacher preparation program and your experiences teaching writing in your classroom.

About the study:
- One 45 minute Zoom interview that will be audio recorded.
- You will receive a $20 Amazon gift card as a thank you.
- To protect your privacy, the published study would use numerical codes.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:
- Have completed a teacher preparation program.
- Have teaching credentials.
- Have experience teaching third, fourth, or fifth grade for at least 2 years.

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Lysette Cohen, a Ph.D. candidate at Walden University. Interviews will take place during spring 2023.

To volunteer, contact the researcher: Lysette Cohen at lysette.cohen@waldenu.edu