



Developing English Language Writing Skills Using the Process Model in Zimbabwean Schools

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Abstract: *This study sought to assess the implementation of the process model in developing academic writing skills at secondary school level by English language teachers. It focused on the writing skills emphasised by English language teachers of the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Certificate (ZIMSEC) syllabus. Of major concern was an analysis of the efficacy of the skills taught in bridging the gap between secondary education and the academic demands of higher education and professional environments. The research employed a mixed method approach. Thus, both the quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed. A sample of fifty teachers was chosen to participate in the study through simple random sampling. Open ended questionnaires were the main data gathering instrument. Data analysis employed a mixed method approach using both qualitative and descriptive statistics. The ANOVA revealed a significant disparity in students' academic writing skills across private schools. While teachers employed various methods such as brainstorming and peer editing to improve writing competence, these approaches fall short of preparing students for professional demands. The study recommends that teacher training institutions in Zimbabwe incorporate academic the process model writing skills into their programs and that practising teachers receive further training through workshops and seminars. This approach would better prepare students for success in both academic and professional settings.*

Keywords: *Academic writing proficiency, Stance, English Second Language learners, Process writing model, Teaching strategies, Fossilise.*

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1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that inadequately trained teachers often struggle to help their students achieve proficiency in academic writing. This stems from a common focus on mastering the four macro skills in language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – rather than specifically targeting academic writing development. Additionally, educators frequently emphasise exam preparation over fostering comprehensive academic language skills. Researchers such as Adika (2019) Lei, Zhang, Deng, Wang, Shao, & Hu, (2021) and Schemelava and Smirnova (2022) have noted a lack of research on academic writing skills in English-speaking

developing countries, particularly Ghana. Despite English's significant role in these regions, some tertiary level students still demonstrate limited proficiency in academic writing (Lei et al., 2021). Korkem, Merey and Fariza (2023) and Lei et al. (2021) have also highlighted that students at colleges of education and universities often struggle with the vocabulary knowledge necessary for producing academic texts. As a result, instructional efforts tend to focus on general writing skills, neglecting the development of specialised academic writing abilities. In Zimbabwe, particularly within private secondary schools, this instructional focus has led to students excelling in general writing but lacking the specialised skills required for academic writing. This situation underscores the need to re-evaluate current approaches to teaching academic

writing and other ESL skills at secondary level. There is general agreement that a robust teacher training programme could significantly enhance students' academic writing abilities (UNESCO, 2021).

This research paper addresses critical questions relating to the conceptualisation of academic writing, the effectiveness of the process model in developing these skills, and the strategies teachers prefer to use when teaching academic writing. The study sought to define academic writing, highlight its importance, explore the application of the process model in improving proficiency, and offer recommendations for enhancing the teaching of academic writing skills. By exploring these issues, the paper sought to contribute to a better understanding of pedagogical approaches that could equip secondary school students with the skills necessary for success in academic writing.

1.1 Research Questions

The paper set out to address the following research questions:

1. How is academic writing conceptualised in literature?
2. What challenges do teachers and students encounter in academic writing?
3. How effectively do teachers employ writing process strategies in enhancing learners' academic writing competence?
4. Which process writing stages do learners adopt while engaging in academic writing?

By exploring these issues, the paper sought to contribute to a better understanding of pedagogical approaches that could equip secondary school students with the skills necessary for success in academic writing.

2. Literature Review

The process writing model, advocated by scholars such as Belyaeva (2022) and Afrin (2016), offers a structured approach to improving writing skills through its stages of pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, and editing (evaluating). This model, rooted in the theories of Hayes and Flower (1980), emphasises learner autonomy and self-assessment, with teachers providing guidance and feedback to foster student engagement and confidence. Writing workshops, a key component of this model, allow students to refine their drafts and address writing challenges collaboratively.

2.1 The demand for academic writing skills

Academic writing can loosely be defined as vibrant, precise, focused writing substantiated by evidence (Griva and Chostelidou, 2013). It brings together related ideas and is evidence based. The tone and style is formal and the language is precise. Colleges and universities normally use this writing style when producing abstracts, research reports, annotated biographies, conference papers and academic journal articles. Colleges and universities use academic writing for various outputs, including research reports, conference papers, and journal articles, which require skills such as argumentation, referencing, and critical reasoning (Lei, Zhang, Deng, Wang, Sha and Hu, 2021) and yet in the Zimbabwean context, fewer than five percent of Zimbabweans are native English speakers, thus, limiting opportunities for immersion and impeding the development of academic writing skills (Viriri and Viriri, 2012).

The Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council syllabus adopts an integrated approach to English instruction, focusing on developing the four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Research by Lei, Zhang, Deng, Wang, Sha and Hu (2021) support this integrated approach, showing that it effectively enhances overall language proficiency. Vocabulary development is central to this process, beginning with basic vocabulary and progressing to complex tasks like writing research papers. (Chikara, 2021; Chikara, 2023) sadly observes that most learners tend to fossilise without achieving some aspects that are deemed important in academic writing settings, and this compounds the challenges of the ESL writer. Another observation was that most learners achieve basic communicative competence instead of more crucial academic writing skills, such as stance (Chikara, 2021). Stance has to do with expression of writer attitude toward a subject that writers will be writing (Cox, 2017). The use of metadiscourse markers like hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement tends to be weak. Other writing challenges observed included among others, issues of cohesion and coherence, flux and fluidity markers and self-mentions (Chikara, 2023). The introduction of English and Communication Skills as an extra subject at Advanced level seems to have failed to address the academic writing challenges as established by Mufanechiya (2012). Another crucial challenge exhibited by student writers is an inability to take a position in argumentative debates. Gonye, Mareva, Dudu, & Sibanda (2012a) have explored the challenges that students in Zimbabwe face with their academic essays and they noted that most English Second language students face serious challenges in sentence construction, tense usage, grammar, and so on as they engage in conversation in what is, for most, a second

language. Similar studies have also been conducted in South Africa (Cekiso, Tshotsho & Masha, 2015; Nel & Müller, 2010; Pineteh, 2013; Tshotsho & Cekiso, 2015). These studies in a southern African context focused on facets such as cohesion and coherence and how home background affects performance in the target language. The effect that historical backgrounds have on performance in the target language or how poor language proficiency in teachers negatively impacts student writing performance cannot be underestimated. Zimbabwean university students, like their counterparts in the rest of the world, usually content that they have not been effectively equipped with these relevant academic writing skills (Gonye et al., 2012b; Efiritha et al., 2014).

The lack of proficiency in academic writing among students is not limited to Zimbabwe or Ghana alone but is a global issue. Studies by Ali (2019), Manawar and Chaudhary (2019), Korkem, Merey and Fariza (2023) confirm existence of the problem and attribute students' difficulties in academic essay writing to inadequate literacy skills. For instance, Schemeleva and Smirnova (2022) found that Russian students do not receive sufficient support in developing academic writing skills, partly due to the misconception that writing abilities develop without formal training. Manawar and Chudhary (2019); Lei, Zhang, Deng, Wang, Shao, & Hu, (2021) and Belyaeva (2023) found that university students struggle with coherent writing, reflecting a broader issue of inadequate language proficiency. To produce high-quality academic texts, students must meet the demands of academic writing, which is characterised by clarity, precision, and evidence-based arguments Korkem, Merey and Fariza (2023). The above studies, however, do not address the question of applying tenets of the process model in academic writing which this paper seeks to explore.

The integrated approach of the process model, coupled with structured academic writing programmes, are anticipated to eventually develop a comprehensive package of skills set. The two will not only enhance writing proficiency but also encourage learner autonomy and prepare students for future academic and professional success.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study is a mixed survey research design which utilised both the quantitative and qualitative research design and it seeks to explore the implementation of the process model in enhancing academic writing skills, with an emphasis of implementing the Zimbabwe School Examinations

Certificate (ZIMSEC) syllabus in six selected high schools. Given the limited prior research on this topic, the survey allowed a variety of methods in recruiting participants, data collection and analysis. Inferences were made from a sample population then generalised onto the population members. Questionnaires with scalable answers were employed to test hypotheses and determine causality. The survey was ideal in that it provided firsthand, exclusive and original primary data for analysis. The target is to move beyond merely describing what is happening to analysing the reasons behind certain patterns or behaviours. This design is advantageous for its simplicity and lack of bias. The design is ideal for hypothesis testing, statistical analysis and generalisation of findings. The explanatory design provides insights that can inform policy, practice, or encourage further research. The mixed survey design was therefore deemed to be the best option (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017).

3.2 Sample and sampling

A purposive sampling method was employed to select six high schools in Harare, Zimbabwe, that use the ZIMSEC syllabus. All English language teachers at these schools were invited to participate, with 50 teachers agreeing to provide insights based on experience in their respective institutions. I first of all numbered all 50 participants 1-50 then chose every tenth individual to be part of my sample for the pilot study. When the results from the pilot study proved viable, I proceeded to administer the rest of the questionnaires.

3.3 Data collection

Data was gathered through self-administered questionnaires distributed to the 50 participating teachers. These questionnaires had quantitative questions. Further interviews were conducted to ratify data from the quantitative survey. Quantitative data focused on demographic information using closed-response questions, while qualitative data collected through open-ended questions which provided insights into the emphasised writing skills.

Data was also gathered through lesson observations in two schools, school A and B. Observation was considered to be an appropriate data collection instrument because it accurately captured teachers' mannerisms as they implemented existing language in education policies in teaching and learning processes. Lesson observation was also key in data collection. The participant sample comprised two English Second Language teachers in two different private schools (Teacher A and Teacher B, both pseudonyms), who were observed teaching and later

interviewed on the crucial aspects of appropriate teaching strategies for academic writing. They had been teaching English for more than five years, three of which had been in private schools. The lesson observations spanned over two months and findings are summarised in the subsequent section of this paper. Simulated recall face-to-face interviews were employed in order to glean information on the teaching strategies adopted by teachers to develop academic writing proficiency. The initial interviews lasted for 30 minutes respectively, and subsequent interviews were 15 minutes long. Further interviews were conducted to ratify data from the quantitative survey.

In this study, I was a non-participant observer, who noted ongoing teaching processes but did not seek to manipulate the variables or the end result (Creswell, 2013; Larkin, 2013; Teherani Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, & Anupma, 2015). Observation enabled me to analyse the contexts of lesson delivery and measure non-elicited behaviour, which occurred spontaneously, in most cases. Thirdly, observation allowed me to study the phenomena at close range. Much of the observation process was a structured one, during which I took note of teaching methods used to foster academic writing skills.

3.4 Data analysis

Quantitative data focused on demographic information using closed-response questions. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics to summarise demographics and identify trends. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data to uncover common patterns in the emphasised writing skills, as recommended by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017). SPSS was used to conduct the quantitative analyses, with results presented in Tables

1-3 hereafter. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a value of 0.7.

A composite score was created by combining the teaching of academic writing skills and the frequency of applying academic writing strategies. This composite score was then categorised into two groups: scores of less than 3 were coded as 0 (representing less effective teaching strategies), while scores of 3 and above were coded as 1 (representing more effective teaching strategies).

Frequencies were calculated for variables such as age, gender, qualifications, and teaching strategies. Multiple response frequencies were run for writing strategies and workplace academic writing skills. A cross-tabulation was conducted for age and qualifications to assess their contribution to the outcome variable, which is the teaching strategy. A Chi-square test was included in the cross-tabulation to determine the p-value for each background variable. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics to summarise demographics and identify trends. Thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data to uncover common patterns in the emphasised writing skills as recommended by (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). SPSS was used to conduct the quantitative analyses, with results presented as Tables 1-3.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study obtained ethical clearance from the University of Zimbabwe Research Center. Participants were given an information sheet detailing the study and thus ensuring informed consent. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and designed to protect confidentiality (Israel & Hay, 2006; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017).

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Percentage distribution and cross tabulation of variables

Variable	Number	Percent	Teaching strategy %		P-Value	
			More effective	Less effective		
Gender	Male	16	32	100	0.001	
	Female	34	68	8.8		
Age	15-30	4	8	100	0.001	
	31-40	24	48	45		
	41-50	19	38	100		
	51+	3	6	33.3		
Qualification						
	Certificate	6	12	23.1	100	0.011
	Diploma	13	26	57.1	76.9	
	Bachelor	28	56	100	42.9	
	Master	3	6	33.3	100	
Total		50	100	100		

Table 1 highlights the distribution of male and female teachers in the sample, showing that 32% were male and 68% were female. The data reveals a significant disparity in the effectiveness of the teaching strategy, with 100% effectiveness observed among male teachers compared to just 8.8% among female teachers, a difference that is statistically significant (p-value = 0.001).

In terms of age distribution, most teachers were between 31-40 years of age, making up 48% of the sample. The process teaching strategy was found to be more effective for teachers aged 31-40 (100%) and those aged 51 and older (100%) as compared to those aged 25-30 (45%) and 41-50 (33.3%). These differences were also statistically significant (p-value = 0.001).

As regards educational qualifications, a significant portion of the teachers held a bachelor's degree in education (56%). The teaching strategy proved to be most effective among teachers with a bachelor's degree (100%) as compared to those with a certificate (23.1%) or diploma (57.1%). This variation was statistically significant (p-value = 0.011).

In summary, the analysis indicated that the teaching strategy used for the Zimbabwe School Examinations Certificate was significantly more effective for male teachers, those aged 31-40 and 51+, and teachers with a bachelor's degree. These findings suggest that gender, age, and educational qualifications may significantly influence the effectiveness of the teaching strategy.

Table 2: Multiple responses on writing strategies

Multiple responses for writing strategies	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Q5. a Paragraph Unit	6	4.8%	12.2%
b. Discourse markers	3	2.4%	6.1%
c. Linking devices	31	24.8%	63.3%
d. Summary writing	19	15.2%	38.8%
e. Public speaking	5	4.0%	10.2%
f. Narrative writing	20	16.0%	40.8%
g. Creative writing	28	22.4%	57.1%
h. Descriptive writing	3	2.4%	6.1%
i. Dictionary skills	7	5.6%	14.3%
j. Argumentative writing	3	2.4%	6.1%
Total	125	100.0%	255.1%

Table 2 revealed that English language educators in the six selected high schools placed greater emphasis on writing strategies that involved the use of linking devices, creative writing, narrative writing, and summary writing. These

strategies were more commonly prioritised compared to other writing techniques like paragraph structuring, public speaking, and dictionary skills.

Table 3: Multiple responses on workplace academic writing skills

Multiple responses for workplace academic writing skills			
Workplace academic writing skills	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Q8. a. Narrative	4	2.0%	8.7%
b. Critical thinking	28	13.7%	60.9%
c. Listening and note taking	16	7.8%	34.8%
d. Report	35	17.2%	76.1%
e. Referencing skills	18	8.8%	39.1%
f. Electronic dictionary	19	9.3%	41.3%
g. Time management	25	12.3%	54.3%
h. Reading	23	11.3%	50.0%
I. Speeches	19	9.3%	41.3%
j. Curriculum Vitae	17	8.3%	37.0%
Total	204	100.0%	443.5%

The findings in Table 3 indicated that English language instructors in the six selected high schools placed less emphasis on workplace-related academic writing skills, particularly in areas like report writing, critical thinking, time management, and reading. Other skills are prioritised more than academic writing skills, such as narrative writing, curriculum vitae preparation, and referencing. This suggests a partial focus on preparing students for professional environments where these skills are highly valued.

The preceding empirical reviewed suggested that weak vocabulary knowledge among Zimbabwean students hinders their ability to write effectively in an academic context. Several key themes emerged from interviews. For example, two participating teachers highlighted the teaching strategies they used and the challenges they faced in implementing appropriate methods.

4.2 Themes emerging from interviews

4.2.1 Application and interest in the process model:

There was a successful application of the process model among proficient writers, but a noticeable lack of interest in this method among weaker writers.

The present study established that teachers found it difficult to identify distinct stages as these are generally not easy to determine, for instance, revision and editing, pausing and reading, and revision and editing work at the same time. This made it difficult for teachers to demarcate

the writing stages that learners would be enhancing. Generally, writers have different preferences as they work on their scripts. It may be proposed that, because the stages of the writing process are flexible, teachers should allow learners to move independently from one stage to another as long as the desired outcomes are met. Korken, Merey and Fariza (2023) admit that the writing process is cyclical in nature, because “writers move back and forth on a continuum discovering, analysing and synthesising ideas.” Consequently, teachers should be more flexible in its application.

The process model significantly addresses some of the writing challenges through brainstorming, planning, pre-writing, and drafting, editing and producing the final document but does not effectively impart academic writing skills. Although the process model writing stages may not follow a linear pattern, when employed accurately, it contributes to academic writing success. According to the participating teachers, pre-planning activities assisted learners with content, paragraph sequence and cohesion, which are key skills in academic writing. The following statements by the teachers interviewed illustrate this belief:

Planning makes learners’ written work cohere but sometimes I have to drill learners in spelling and grammaticality. (Teacher A)

Groups and pairs collaborate in planning the essays but in some

instances, memorisation of idioms improves expression. (Teacher B)

4.2.2 Combination of teaching strategies:

The primary theme was that teachers utilised a mix of the process model and traditional teaching strategies.

The interview responses revealed that teachers employed a variety of approaches to teaching academic writing. Ten teachers indicated some deviations from the process model, incorporating traditional methods such as spelling competitions and debates. These teachers recognised that students produce academically sound texts when their general writing competencies are strengthened. Belyaeva (2022) supports this view, suggesting that poor writers benefit from alternative writing techniques that may not strictly align with the process model.

In a bid to improve the process model writing techniques, the selected teachers integrated collaborative activities such as pair and group work. Munawar and Abid Chaudhary (2019) support this initiative, noting that students who participate in collaborative activities tend to achieve higher intellectual development and produce more effective writing than those who work alone.

The interview findings also reinforced the idea that writing is a non-linear and recursive process, which can make it difficult for learners to consistently adhere to all five stages of the process model.

The responses reveal that teachers relied on both the process model and traditional methods such as memorisation and drilling. It appears that combining these strategies yields positive results. Ali (2019), Beyeva (2022) and Manawar and Chaudhary (2021) suggest that significant errors are reduced when the process model is followed.

During the interviews, teachers admitted their lack of familiarity with effective strategies for teaching the writing of conference papers and journal articles, which are key components of academic writing assignments.

I am unfamiliar with teaching writing journals and conference papers because we never learnt about these at teachers' training colleges. (Teacher A)

I still need exposure to writing research reports and research proposals (Teacher B)

The deficiency in essential writing skills among teachers is likely to have a negative impact on their students, thereby affecting the students' academic writing abilities. A study by Kokem, Merey and Farika (2023) suggests adopting a problem-based learning approach with corrective feedback so as to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, especially for high-achieving students.

Another significant theme that emerged from the teacher interviews was the effective use of the process model by proficient writers, contrasted with a lack of interest in writing among weaker learners. This perspective was reflected in the following teachers' statements:

Good writers tend to apply the process model better than less skilful writers. (Teacher A)

Learners who write competently have fewer challenges employing the process model compared to their weaker counterparts. (Teacher B)

The research findings indicate that proficient writers effectively used the five stages of the process model, namely: pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, and editing, in a non-linear and recursive manner. Despite innovative teaching methods, some weaker learners continued to exhibit writing deficits, likely due to the challenging nature of academic writing and unfamiliar topics. According to some scholars, (Korkem, Merey, & Fariza, 2023; Adika, 2019; Elena Belyaeva, 2022), a lack of student interest can undermine even the most effective teaching techniques.

Generally speaking, the process model has proved to be successful in generating cross-disciplinary arguments (Korkem, Merey, & Fariza, 2023), and methods such as peer learning and analysis-based learning have proven effective, leading to successful project-based outcomes (Adika, 2019; Elena Belyaeva, 2022). Future strategies should focus on addressing individual needs and incorporating Bloom's taxonomy so as to enhance academic writing skills. This research supports the existing literature on problem-based learning and peer assessment while also addressing specific gaps in writing skills development. Effective pedagogical strategies include positive reinforcement, corrective feedback, and scaffolding (Korkem, Merey, & Fariza, 2023).

4.2.3 Use of inadequate textbooks:

Another significant theme was the use of textbooks that do not effectively support the process model of writing,

contributing to students' limited vocabulary knowledge. This includes deficiencies in understanding collocations, spelling, and the syntactic and semantic roles of words in essay writing. As the two teachers revealed:

It is difficult to determine whether learners are on the editing or revision stages because they occur simultaneously (Teacher A).

Sometimes when I think learners are planning, they will be actually drafting their scripts (Teacher B).

4.3 Results from the observation of the teaching strategies employed by teachers to develop academic writing skills

Table 4: Teaching strategies employed by teachers to develop academic writing skills

Oral discussions	Journaling	Modelling	Peer editing	Reviewing
Online activities	Teaching vocabulary through collocations	Introducing academic vocabulary lists	Role-play	Supplementary reading
Drilling	Peer-editing	Reviewing	Matching formats	Portfolio development

The table above summarises key techniques the observed teachers employed to enhance writing instruction. These included games, journaling, peer editing, and the use of collocations. These activities promote higher-order skills such as inferring and identifying bias in texts. A notable approach was portfolio development, where learners collected articles on various cultures and wrote book reviews based on additional reading, as recommended by Ali (2019). Teacher A occasionally implemented the "Think-Pair-Share" method, where students would reflect on a topic, discuss their thoughts with a partner, and then proceed to carry out the writing process.

Both teachers highlighted brainstorming as a crucial strategy that allows learners to think deeply about essay topics, analyse problems, and develop a comprehensive understanding of content. Teacher input facilitated learners' exploration of new ideas and kept them focused. Occasionally, Teacher A, for example, encouraged students to predict the outcomes of dilemmas so as to spark creativity, aligning with brainstorming. Generally speaking, the teachers in private schools demonstrated considerable resourcefulness in structuring their lessons.

The use of textbooks that were not well-aligned with the process model was noted as a concern. The available textbook, *English Today Book 2*, a Zimbabwean publication, appears contrived and less cognitively demanding. It does not fully support the process model of writing, underemphasising stages like peer reviewing and editing in particular. According to Korkem, Meray and Fariz (2023), the use of inappropriate textbooks can hinder the development of required proficiency levels, potentially leading to subtractive bilingualism. There is a clear need

for textbooks aligned with the ZIMSEC syllabus to further support writing instruction.

4.4 Discussion

The interview data highlighted various instructional strategies used by Zimbabwean teachers to teach academic writing. Most teachers preferred the process model, which emphasises creative writing skills rather than academic writing tasks such as research papers, reports, minute-taking, and proposals. The interviews revealed that many ESL teachers lacked effective strategies for developing academic writing skills in learners. They admitted to having insufficient training in crucial areas such as writing research reports, referencing, and producing academic papers and journal articles. Their training primarily focused on general writing skills such as grammar, spelling, creative essay writing, and reading proficiency, with the expectation that these skills would naturally translate into academic contexts. Other skills are prioritised more than academic writing skills such as narrative writing, preparation of curriculum vitae and referencing. This suggests a partial focus on preparing students for professional environments where these skills are highly valued.

Most teachers agreed that error correction, particularly during group, pair, or class discussions, was an effective strategy for improving writing proficiency. They found that encouraging multiple drafts and collaborative writing significantly enhanced students' writing skills. Belyaeva (2022) and Manawar and Chaudhary (2019) found that students who engaged in collaborative tasks performed

better than those working individually, as collaborative learning fosters comprehension, critical thinking, and responsibility for one's learning. The process model has been shown to be effective in teaching ESL in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to assess the implementation of the process model in developing academic writing skills at secondary school level. Specifically, the study sought to identify the stages of the writing process and evaluate how effectively teachers used them to enhance writing skills. English language educators in the six selected high schools place greater emphasis on writing strategies that involve the use of linking devices, creative writing, narrative writing, and summary writing. These strategies are more commonly prioritised compared to other writing techniques like paragraph structuring, public speaking, and dictionary skills. The findings provide strong evidence supporting the process model's broader application within the professional community more than in high school writing classes. However, preceding empirical review suggests that weak vocabulary knowledge among Zimbabwean students hinders their ability to write effectively in an academic context.

The process teaching strategy was found to be more effective for teachers aged 31-40 (100%) and those aged 51 and older (100%) compared to those aged 25-30 (45%). The study revealed that proficient writers understood and applied the writing stages without following a linear pattern. Despite the challenges of teaching writing in a second language, students' academic writing skills could be significantly improved through well-structured process writing activities, appropriate feedback, and clear writing goals. This research demonstrates that practice, combined with mastering diction, spelling conventions, and cohesive devices, significantly enhances writing skills. The results indicate that using the process writing model alongside other strategies effectively boosts learners' writing proficiency.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the insights from the literature review and findings from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. To improve academic writing skills in Zimbabwean secondary schools, it is suggested that technology be integrated into the learning

process. The school authorities should upgrade and equip public libraries with ICT resources so as to enhance students' engagement with reading and writing. This approach is particularly feasible for well-funded private schools.

2. School principals should adjust timetables to provide more opportunities for students to practise independent writing.
3. Teachers should foster a writing culture among students, encouraging them to write for enjoyment as well as academic purposes.
4. To ensure effective instructional practices, English language proficiency assessments should be conducted for teachers during the recruitment process.
5. ESL learners should have access to forums where they can learn research-based writing skills through peer teaching and idea exchange.
6. School principals should support teachers in pursuing various pre-service training programmes, such as the UK-based Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), and the Trinity Certificate in TESOL. It is recommended that teacher development seminars and workshops be introduced so as to enhance this approach.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could explore additional applications of the process model to enhance academic writing performance in less affluent schools, such as government and council schools, so as to provide a comprehensive understanding of writing proficiency across different school types in Zimbabwe. Additionally, expanding the study to include ESL teaching practices at university level could provide further insights into academic writing development.

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