**Teachers’ Writing Improves after an Intervention Program Meant to Enhance Students’ Writing of Argumentative Texts**

**Abstract**

This study focuses on the improvement in argumentative text writing that occurred among eight fifth-grade teachers after they took an intervention program meant to promote students’ writing achievements. The improvement in teachers’ knowledge of writing instruction was followed by an improvement in their own ability to write argumentative texts and of their self-perception as researchers. The improvement in the teachers’ writing prowess was assessed through several measures of writing, related mainly to the development of the ability to reason in order to substantiate an argument. The findings demonstrate the importance of settings of professional development at the elementary level in the fields of writing, writing instruction, and especially, argumentative writing.

Keywords: argumentative writing, professional development, teachers as writers, teaching knowledge, writing instruction

**Introduction**

In recent decades, argumentative writing has been a key component of curriculum reforms in schools around the world (Newell et al., 2011). As early as the 1990s, researchers have been claiming that teachers who write and experience success, enthusiasm, and confidence in their writing will serve as role models for their students (Emig, 1971; Geekie et al., 1999). Students’ motivation to write is grounded in their teacher’s beliefs and abilities as a writer because these factors shape students’ beliefs about themselves as writers (Daniels, 2018).

An argument is a complex verbal and social demarche that focuses on an interaction between two or more interlocutors that aims to resolve disagreements. Many researchers explain that participants in an argument try to convince each other of the correctness of their claims by applying a personal thought process in which they deliberately communicate with their interlocutor’s mental representation and expand or reduce a controversial point ofview (Berland & NcNeill, 2010; Crasnich & Lumbelli, 2005; Van Eemeren et al., 1996; Berrill, 1992; Crammond, 1998; Qin & Karabacak, 2010; Nussbaum et al., 2005; Allen et al., 2019). The complexity of an argumentative text stems in part from the writer’s need to engage in argumentational activities and textual activities simultaneously (Dellerman et al., 1996; Allen et al., 2019). Teachers are limited in their knowledge of how to create a reasoned argument and are unaware of the contentual and procedural knowledge required to produce argumentative writing (Beyer & Davis, 2008). In previous studies, various strategies are offered that may help teachers as writers to develop the ability to reason in argumentative texts in order to produce a coherent text that meets its goals:

**Setting specific goals for writing—**When teachers provide clear directions about what to include in the essay and encourage writers to persevere, allowing them to track their progress toward the overall goal, their writing performance may improve (Ferretti et al., 2005).

**Focusing on opposing positions and counterarguments—**Many writers tend to focus on advancing their argument and factors in support of it without addressing the opposing arguments (Felton & Kuhn, 2001; Kuhn & Udell, 2003). According to Walton (2007, 2011, 1989), [זה חסר בביבליוגרפיה] writers base their arguments on two goals—using counterarguments to support their arguments and invoking the possibility of challenging the opposing position by identifying weaknesses in it. In both, the writer must pay attention to the opponent’s position and counterarguments. According to Walton, novice arguers fail to attain the dual goals of argumentative discourse—identifying weaknesses in counterarguments and using them to support their own claims. It is also found (Mateos et al., 2018) that writers are able to refer to and even counter the other’s position when asked to do so explicitly. What is more, when writers are given goals for writing an argument that instruct them to provide solid support for their position and formulate counterarguments, they turned out high-quality argumentative texts (Ferretti et al., 2005).

**Linguistic components for use in creating and establishing dialogues between writer and reader—**According to various scholars (Fløttum et al., 2006; Hyland, 2001, 2005; Author b, 2012), dialogue includes the writer’s interaction with him/herself, with the reader, and with other texts. Typical linguistic devices for creating dialogues in an argumentative text include interrogatives, syntactic structures that express contrast and concession, and various rhetorical expressions.

**Producing a coherent and cohesive text—**Cohesion and connectivity are essential features in producing a logical and comprehensible unit of discourse (Kostopoulou, 2007). In argumentative texts, writers are expected to develop and explain arguments that support their position and to work efficiently in the writing process in order to produce a text that conveys a meaningful message, reflects their ideas, and is easy to understand for their readers, while complying with the rules of cohesion and connectivity. Therefore, it is important and even necessary to integrate these two elements into the curriculum such that teachers will teach the process and the rules explicitly (Crowhurst, 1981; Gao, 2012; Liu & Braine, 2005; Mutwarasibo, 2013; Yang & Sun, 2012).

***Professional Development for Writing Instruction***

Since the 1990s, teacher quality and students’ academic achievements have been found closely related (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 1997; Nye et al., 2004; Rice, 2003; Rivkin et al., 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright et al., 1997). The effectiveness of writing instruction in elementary schools has been found to be mediocre. In a review of empirical works between 1990 and 2015 on teachers as writers. Cremin and Oliver (2017) showed that teachers have narrow perceptions about what is considered good writing and that multiple tensions are involved, related to teachers’ low self-confidence as writers and insufficient experience in writing and writing instruction. In Goldenberg et al. (2011), teachers admitted that they did not feel comfortable with the craft of teaching writing because they had not practiced it extensively during their professional development. Teachers who feel insecure in their knowledge of writing instruction feel incompetent or unwilling to teach writing and avoid doing so (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Harward et al., 2014; Klehm, 2014; Mosenthal, 1995; Marculitis, 2017). In a random sample of fourth- to sixth-grade elementary-school teachers across the United States, nearly two-thirds of participants reported that their teacher-training courses in college had given them scant preparation for writing instruction (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Other studies propose professional development for teachers to guide them toward building knowledge of content and of effective instruction (Marculitis, 2017; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Parr & Jesson, 2016; Howell, et al., 2018; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Initial training and professional-development programs provide teachers with opportunities to reformulate their attitudes and self-esteem as writers (Cermin & Oliver, 2017). Teachers of writing may develop new understandings that can enrich their pedagogy and influence their students’ achievements (Gennrich & Janks, 2013; St. John et al., 2004). By inference, the most effective way to improve student achievement in writing is to provide teachers with professional development that expands their knowledge of writing and writing instruction and changes their pedagogical beliefs about both (Wood & Lieberman, 2000; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013).

According to Swan (2003), professional-development workshops enable teachers to explore their writing skills and later guide them to translate the skills they acquire into effective classroom teaching. Research evidence supports the hypothesis that the effectiveness of teachers’ reading and writing instruction is contingent upon their becoming confident and enthusiastic readers and writers themselves (Atwell, 1987, 1991; Calkins, 1993; Commeyras et al., 2003; Gambrell, 1996; Gilespie, 1991; Graves, 1978, 1983, 1994; Mueller, 1973; Murray, 1985; Routman, 1991). Monte-Sano and Allen (2018) found that the level of sophistication of students’ written arguments depends on the teaching and guidance they receive from their teachers.

Teachers have difficulty with specific components of argument-writing instruction, such as finding evidence and arguments in support of a claim, and their understanding of the concept of reasoning is limited (Hillocks, 2010; Newell et al., 2011). Teachers are often unaware of concepts such as evidence or causal evidence and are therefore unable to effectively incorporate explicit teaching of reasoning and argumentation into their classroom teaching. Thus, expanding teachers’ knowledge of writing text for argumentative purposes is essential to promote the development of reasoning and argumentation among students (McNeill, 2009; McNeill & Pimentel 2010). Finally, teachers’ professional development that focuses on argumentation instruction helps its participants to acquire a better understanding of the essence of an argumentative text (McNeill & Knight, 2013).

**The Current Study**

Given the global need to improve the quality of students’ writing and to test the impact of different types of writing interventions tailored to students’ needs (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Rosário et al., 2019), we base this article on a broad study that examined the improvement of students’ achievement in writing after their teachers participated in a professional-development program. Only some of the findings are reported below: those that focus on the connection between the elaboration of teachers’ knowledge of writing instruction and the improvement of their own writing abilities and their self-perception as writers, following an intervention program that proposed to improve students’ ability to write text for argumentative purposes. Thus, the research question is whether and how a process of professional development meant to promote student achievements in writing enhanced the teachers’ own achievements in writing argumentative texts.

***Method***

This experimental mixed-method study relies on paradigms from qualitative research and invokes a quantitative method to measure the impact of the intervention program on the achievements of eight teachers in writing texts for argumentative purposes. The investigators were involved in the intervention program and its guidance. The current study relies on the findings of a broader study that examined the students’ and teachers’ performance before and at the end of the intervention program (Author a, 2019). The students’ outcomes are not reported in this article.

***Participants***

The participants were eight Hebrew-language teachers who took an advanced professional-development training program (henceforth ‘the training program’) in which they learned about the writing process in general, and how to perfect the instruction of writing argumentative text in particular, by applying diverse instructional practices. They then applied this knowledge in their classes. The intervention was performed among eighty Hebrew-speaking fifth graders, mostly native Hebrew speakers, who were students of the teachers who participated in the training program.

***The Intervention Program***

Based on previous studies that aimed to enhance students’ writing by means of their teachers’ professional development (e.g., Graham & Harris, 2018; Graham et al., 2013) and in accordance with the language-development curriculum at the elementary level, the intervention program provided teacher-training in ten three-hour sessions across a full year, accompanied by the application of what was learned in the participants’ classrooms. The process took place under the guidance of one of the investigators, who serves as a national instructor for teachers in the field of language education in elementary schools. Although approximately twenty teachers took part in the training, only eight gave their consent to participate in the study; therefore, the information and findings that follow refer to them only. The goals of the program were to expand the teachers’ knowledge of writing, foster their positive self-efficacy and self-confidence in writing, and broaden their teaching knowledge so that they could teach writing in the classroom and improve their students’ writing by so doing. The program included improving the teachers’ understanding of the process of writing texts in general and argumentative texts in particular, experience in writing argumentative texts, and evaluating them on the basis of theoretical models. The learning process included activities such as identifying linguistic-rhetorical components in argumentative texts, classroom exercises in contemplating a problem or issue from various points of view, and learning new strategies for improvement of reasoning, such as linguistic components for the creation and maintenance of a dialogue between writer and reader, tools for producing a coherent and connected text, using appropriate syntactic and discursive structures for presenting counter-arguments, carrying out authentic [= real-life?] tasks in which the goal and the readership are well defined, and participating in a collaborative argument writing exercise. The teachers were exposed to new ways of developing the ability to reason and expand their argumentative content in order to produce high-quality and well-reasoned argumentative texts that include different points of view. In the advanced training sessions, discussions were held and written products of the teachers and their students were analyzed. The joint discussions focused on ideas for encouraging dialogic writing, such as examining contrary positions—for example, by asking questions that addressed the other’s views or by creating diagrams of arguments for and against a certain position. The teachers also experienced writing in accordance with the genre and purpose of the text. As mentioned, to examine the impact of this learning on the teachers’ personal progress in writing, they had to write two argumentative texts: one at the beginning of the program and another at its end.

Another task that the teachers experienced during the training program was keeping a personal blog. Teachers were asked to express every week thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and feelings about their personal learning experience, describe their classroom experience following what they had learned in the program, and present insights about it. At the end of the training program, the participants shared their data-rich personal blogs with the investigators for use in the qualitative analysis.

While participating in the training program, the teachers applied the knowledge they acquired in their classrooms. This knowledge included explicit instructional practices for writing an argumentative text, with emphasis on content development and expansion of reasoning. In the course of these classroom experiences, their students were instructed to pay keen attention to the purpose of their writing, identify the readership and the context, and give these elements a place in their writing in order to create a text tailored to the readers. They also learned to set aside time for joint thinking and discussion in order to plan the text and to emphasize writing arguments, counter-arguments, and refutation by means of contrastive structures (antithesis and concession).

***Research Tools***

*Writing Assignments*

The eight teachers were assigned two tasks in argumentative writing, both developed for this purpose: one at the beginning of the training program and the other at its conclusion. Each assignment included the presentation of a topic on which they were asked to take a stance and write an argumentative text that presents their position to a defined audience for the purpose of persuasion. Concurrently, the teachers’ students in class were also given two writing assignments, one at the beginning of the intervention and the other at the end.

Task 1, given before the intervention (Text 1), was formulated as follows: ‘As an educator, you are interested in taking a stance on students’ use of Facebook. Is Facebook for children aged 10–12 worth it? Think about the subject from different angles, read information, expand your knowledge, formulate positions. Write and try to convince the other teachers in the group of your position’. Task 2, given at the conclusion of the intervention (Text 2), was formulated as follows: ‘The Ministry of Education and the Teachers’ Union are considering allowing teachers to take a vacation during the year in a way that does not correspond to the ordinary schedule of teachers’ vacations. [כך?] What do you think about this? Write a letter to the committee at the Ministry of Education that deals with the topic, express your position, and try to convince the committee members to accept it’.

These two slightly different genres(a ‘position paper’ and an argumentative letter) were not part of the training program and were not examined in this study. The research focused on the content of writing, the ability to reason, and the structure of the text.

*An index for evaluating writing quality*

The teachers’ and students’ writing assignments were assessed with the help of an analytical index that the investigators constructed in order to examine measurable achievements before and after the intervention. Analytical assessment of writing that includes clear measurement criteria is found to enhance the focus and rigor of the assessment process, and the reduction of a written text into its components is useful in migating the influence of irrelevant factors (QuelJrnalz, 1986). The evaluation using the index addressed itself to the presence and quality of the measures. The notation in the index makes it possible to evaluate performance at four levels: optimal, partial, scant, or absent. The assessment components in the index are based on national assessment test indicators for primary-school students in Israel. The analytical index that was developed (see Appendix) includes criteria for evaluating the content, quality of reasoning, structure, and vocabulary of the text. Scoring took place on a four-point scale comprising ‘very good’, ‘good’, ‘average’, and ‘poor’, scored 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively (Jumariati, & Sulistyo, 2017). As the index was built, five performance measures generally related to writing, such as cohesion, connectivity, and vocabulary (i.e., accuracy in word choice and style) were defined, but aspects of writing conventions such as spelling and punctuation were omitted. In accordance with the aim of the study, most components of the index focused on the ability to produce appropriate reasoning.

A holistic approach to evaluating the written texts, treating each text as a whole rather than reducing it to its components (Galti et al., 2018; Scriven, 1994), was also employed in this study. The advantage of this evaluative strategy centers in its ability to yield a general impression of the overall quality of the writing. Therefore, the investigators also evaluated the eight teachers’ texts holistically in order to identify the use of vocabulary, the choice of phrases, and the attainment of cohesion of the texts before and after the intervention, as suggested by Galti et al. (2018).

*Personal Blogs*

During the year of the training program, the teachers kept personal blogs in which they documented what they had learned and the way they applied it in the classroom. Their blogs included insights, conclusions, and attitudes toward writing and reports on the application of their new knowledge in class after the program. It also gave them a model for use in future experiences with students in class.

The rich data gathered from these blogs were evaluated qualitatively in accordance with the ‘natural data’ method (Silverman, 2006). The analysis was based on sorting expressions that the teachers used in the texts into main content categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 73) and on content analysis that yielded diverse categories of words and descriptions that reflect emotions, thoughts, and beliefs according to the context in which they were expressed (Krippendorff, 2013, 2018).

The analysis of the blogs according to grounded theory produced a series of findings. It revealed change and progress in the teachers’ personal and professional knowledge of writing and writing instruction; in their attitudes toward writing instruction as a result of the training program; and in the impact of these on their teaching as described from their point of view.

**Findings**

The findings address the impact of the professional development program on teachers’ personal and professional knowledge of writing and writing instruction. They were produced in the following ways:

1. Evaluation of the texts written by the teachers before and at the conclusion of the intervention on the basis of the index and from the holistic perspective.

2. Content analysis of the teachers’ personal blogs.

3. The impact of the intervention on students’ achievements in writing ability.

***Findings from the Evaluation of the Teachers’ Texts***

The intervention program included a process in which the teachers engaged in ‘conscious writing’, in which they were made aware of each step in the process. Although the texts they produced may be regarded as the products of skilled writers, the findings show that the training program had a positive effect on the teachers’ writing skills, including their ability to reason broadly, use counterarguments, and produce writing that is more cohesive, more focused on the topic at hand, and attuned to the purpose of the text. In their post-intervention texts, the teachers seemed to concentrate less on the structure of the argumentative text, which includes the presentation of an argument accompanied by support of the claim, and more on expanding the reasoning and strengthening the argument. The teachers’ writing progress indicates that the intervention program improved their writing on respects that had been weak before the intervention.

Figure 1 contrasts the teachers’ writing achievements before the intervention with those at the conclusion of the intervention on the basis of the index.

**Figure 1. Teachers’ Writing Achievements before and after the Intervention**

The Y-axis presents the scores for both texts. The highest score obtained was 68 (100%). The X-axis shows the eight teachers (A–H). In the columns, the teachers’ scores before the intervention (orange) are compared side-by-side with those earned for their writing at the conclusion of the intervention (blue). The statistically significant improvement among the eight teachers is evident.

Figure 2 shows the average change in teachers’ texts before (Text 1) and after the intervention (Text 2) in various writing measures**.**

**Figure 2. Average Scores on Both Texts, Specific Measures**

תיקונים למקרא:

כיתוב שני משמאל  
Reasons relating to opposing position

כיתוב אחרון משמאל   
Conclusion

כיתוב בתחתית המקרא: למחוק  
“the”

The Y-axis shows the average scores of the eight teachers’ texts before the intervention (blue) and after it (orange) in specific components of argumentation. Here, the highest score allowed by the analytical index (see index) was 4 points: reference to opposing position, providing reasons for the opposing position, use of specific syntactic structures to express contrast, clear logical connections between arguments, and the occurrence of conclusion. [האם זה לא 5 מדידות?]

Figure 2 shows that the teachers were able to improve their writing and produce better argumentative texts after the intervention program. The most significant progress was found in measures that aimed at substantiating the central claim, such as presenting opposing positions accompanied by counterarguments, using concessive structures as a linguistic means to create dialogicity, and using appropriate vocabulary and style.

In contrast to the students’ texts, which were assessed using the analytical indicator alone, the teachers’ texts were also evaluated on the basis of a holistic analysis of the entire written essay, focusing on its main message or idea. In the holistic analysis, it was found that while the pre-intervention texts included superfluous information that at times harmed the coherence of the text, the texts written at the end of the intervention were shorter but more complex in structure and content, more focused on the issue in question, more cohesive, and enriched with more relevant arguments. It is evident that the teachers learned about the importance of using contrastive syntactic and textual structures to present opposing positions that helped them produce texts that focused on the dilemma at hand and promoted their position while presenting and refuting opposing positions.

***Findings from the Teachers’ Personal Blogs***

The findings in this section refer to the attitudes of teachers as writers toward writing and teaching writing before and at the conclusion of the intervention. The texts that the teachers wrote in their personal blogs were subjected to content analysis and grouped into the categories described below.

*Teachers’ Attitudes toward the Act of Writing*

At the beginning of the intervention, all eight teachers expressed the view that writing, for them, is a complex, challenging task that requires much effort:

* *When I have to write even a greeting, I find myself sitting in front of the page and having a hard time formulating it.*
* *Writing always puts me to a lot of effort, more than situations where I have to speak or read.*
* *As a student and as a teacher, I have invested and still invest a lot of effort in writing.*

In contrast, at the end of the learning process, all eight teachers stated that the enhancement of their knowledge of instruction in class also contributed to their writing and increased their self-confidence as writers.

* *As a writer, the strategies I acquired in the course, the experience of writing in a group, and the exposure to a variety of texts contributed a lot to me, and today, when I have to write, I approach the page with much more calm and confidence.*

*• You could say that writing has always been my Achilles heel as I personally feel. I have always felt that I am not professional enough in this field and that in order to teach it I need to become a more expert writer. In this program, I felt that I was getting tools for myself and, of course, for teaching in class.*

*Teachers’ Attitudes toward Teaching Writing*

At the beginning of the intervention, six of the eight teachers expressed concern and discomfort in their attitudes toward teaching writing.

* *I have always felt that this is a subject that is very difficult for me to teach and convey content to my students optimally.*
* *Argumentative writing is complex writing for students and it’s not easy to teach.*

The teachers’ self-confidence in writing instruction increased perceptibly during and after the training program. They reported having been able to augment their instructional knowledge and use it in class.

* *The confidence I feel today when I teaching writing is felt in the classroom; students don’t give up on writing anymore.*
* *The main thing I learned was to make room for the opening lesson, to hear what the children have to say about each topic, and not to be afraid of learning in stages. I make sure to prepare the children before they write the text and not to rush into it..*

In their blogs, the teachers expressed their self-learning as writers.

* *I learned the importance of cohesion and connectivity in the text. I learned how to write a short, focused paragraph using conjunctions. I definitely learned the important skill of sequencing and organizing information at the personal and professional levels.*
* *I learned how to approach writing a text myself. As we progressed in the training, I felt it was easier and easier for me to address any subject that could be written about and know what I was going to write within a few minutes.*
* *When I felt that I had made a change in thinking and realized that it was possible to write differently, the students also began to make a change. This is my success.*

These findings show that as a result of the training program, the attitudes of the eight teachers toward writing changed for the better and their self-confidence as writers and as teachers who teach the craft of writing increased. Following their learning experience and the broadening of their knowledge, the six teachers who initially expressed feelings of apprehension and discomfort about the craft of writing articulated the sense of their ability to write and to teach writing.

***Impact of the Intervention on Student Achievements***

The findings (Table 1 and Author a, 2019) indicate a statistically significant positive difference in the achievements of primary-school students who participated in the intervention program in the course of one school year. The intervention group showed great progress. In accordance with the findings from the teachers’ texts (see above), progress in the students’ writing was most significant in those measures that aimed at substantiating the central claim, such as presenting opposing positions accompanied by counterarguments, using concessive structures as a linguistic means to create dialogicity, and vocabulary and style.

**Table 1. Students’ Achievements in Texts Written before and after the Intervention\***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Components of indicator** | | **Before intervention** | | **End of intervention** | |
| **Mean** | **S.D.** | **Mean** | **S.D.** |
| **1** | Matching of text to topic |  |  |  |  |
| **2** | Matching of text to purpose of text (genre) |  |  |  |  |
| **3** | Beginning of text |  |  |  |  |
| **4** | Body of text |  |  |  |  |
| **5** | Conclusion of text |  |  |  |  |
| **6** | **Presentation of dilemma associated with the topic** |  |  |  |  |
| **7** | Writer’s argument |  |  |  |  |
| **8** | Consideration of reader’s knowledge |  |  |  |  |
| **9** | Orientation to reader by dialogic means |  |  |  |  |
| **10** | Presentation of logical, diverse, and credible reasoning |  |  |  |  |
| **11** | Reasoning expanded and accompanied by detail, explanation, and example |  |  |  |  |
| **12** | Logical relation of argument to reasoning |  |  |  |  |
| **13** | **Presentation of views opposed to the writer’s** |  |  |  |  |
| **14** | **Presentation of reasoning relating to the opposing -position** |  |  |  |  |
| **15** | **Presentation of opposing reasoning by logical connection of contrast or concession** |  |  |  |  |
| **16** | **Presentation of connection among reasonings** |  |  |  |  |
| **17** | **Conclusion** |  |  |  |  |
| **18** | Cohesion |  |  |  |  |
| **19** | Connectivity |  |  |  |  |
| **20** | Vocabulary |  |  |  |  |

**\*** The components in which a significant improvement occurred are highlighted.

**4. Discussion and Conclusions**

Here we discuss the main conclusions that emerge from the study in reference to the teachers’ abilities and beliefs.

***Impact of the Intervention Program on Teachers’ Writing Abilities***

Our findings show that systematic professional development in the field of writing instruction, aimed at teaching teachers to experience writing, learn about writing processes, and apply what they learned in their classes, strengthened both teachers’ writing ability and their confidence as writers. These findings are in line with previous findings (Wood & Liberman, 2000; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Graham & Harris 2019), according to which the development of teachers’ writing concurrent with the acquisition of instruction knowledge can help teachers become more skillful and confident writers who can teach writing from a position of command of this craft in all its complexity. As mentioned, due to the limited number of teachers who participated in the study, we chose to base the assessment of the teachers’ texts on two analysis: one similar to the assessment of the students’ texts and the other holistic. Specifically, the teachers’ writing after the intervention included elements that reinforce reasoning, an element that did not stand out or did not appear at all in their writing before the intervention. Examining the teachers’ texts, we found an improvement in the writing results, especially in the components of reference to opposing position, providing reasons for the opposing position, use of specific syntactic structures to express contrast, clear logical connections between arguments, and the presentation of a conclusion. We found more accurate choice of words and use of diverse and appropriate conjunctions in their arguments.

The changes that took place in the teachers’ texts in the post-intervention examination show that processes meant to improve writing can help skilled writers as well as novice writers. These findings agree with previous studies that focused on teachers as writers, which found that improving teachers’ writing processes helped to refine their writing and subsequently allowed them to demonstrate to their students the processes involved and provide expert knowledge and advice based on experience (Grainger, 2005b; Cremin, 2006; Cremin et al., 2017). Moreover, the findings indicate a relationship among the indicators that improved in both groups, teachers and students.

***Impact of the Intervention Program on Teachers’ Beliefs***

The texts written by the teachers in their personal blogs indicate that the intervention program influenced their beliefs about their own writing and their ability to improve their students’ writing. In line with previous findings (Rietdijk, van Weijen, Janssen, van den Bergh, & Rijlaarsdam, 2018), our findings show that teachers felt more confident both in their own writing abilities and in teaching writing after a process of training and instruction and that their newly gained experience as writers influenced their perceptions and attitudes toward writing. Before the intervention, some teachers expressed the feeling that writing is a challenging task that requires much effort; at the end of the training program, in contrast, they stated that their self-confidence as writers had increased. There was also a change in their approach to writing instruction, from fear and discomfort at the beginning of the process to a sense of having succeeded in expanding their knowledge of instruction and applying it in class. The teachers reported that the learning process in the training program contributed to their skills as writers and teachers of writing because it gave them a better understanding of what is required of writers when they approach the task of writing. In the present study, the intervention program directed teachers toward strategies previously unfamiliar to them in writing an argumentative text—strategies that focus on the ability to look at an issue from two perspectives, support personal positions, present arguments appropriate to opposing positions, and more. The intervention helped teachers give implement explicit instructions and believe that they are capable of teaching argumentative text writing and helping their students to progress by means of focused teaching of elements related to substantiating an argument.

At the end of the intervention, after a process of learning and, as a result, explicit instruction in their classroom, the teachers acquired the ability to present arguments in their own writing that not only expressed their own position but also referred to the opposing position in a certain way. It is evident that the teachers learned to consider and present in their texts alternative views and even views contrary to their own position and accompany them with reasoning and examples. They also showed considerable improvement in using techniques relating to orientation to the reader and dialogic methods that amplify the effectiveness of the text vis-à-vis the reader. Their performance in these respects strengthened the persuasive power of their texts.

The present study shows that participation in the intervention program enhanced teachers’ knowledge of writing instruction by having them implement their newly acquired writing strategies and skills in both their teaching and their writing, improving their own writing abilities and their self-perception as writers.

***Implications***

In view of urgings by researchers in recent years (Graham & Alves, 2021) to instill and strengthen knowledge of writing and writing instruction, the findings of this study give education policymakers a future path for the professional development of writing instruction among teachers in general and primary-school teachers in particular. It may not be possible for primary-school teachers to encourage their students to write unless they themselves undergo a process of personal progress in writing. It seems imperative for the education system to improve its settings of professional development in writing instruction and to take into account the importance of teachers’ experience as writers alongside the imparting of pedagogical knowledge aimed at classroom teaching. Rethinking is needed in order to design settings of study where teachers may experience writing in various genres.

This study is unique in its focus on writing in the argumentative genre. Ferretti and Graham (2019) emphasize the gap between the slow and late development of written argumentation text and the early appearance, at a young age, of oral argumentation. This underscores the need for professional development opportunities that focus on teaching how to write an argumentative text and incorporate in-depth study of methods of reasoning and exploring different perspectives on one issue. The learning process should equip its participants with methods and strategies for developing reasoning ability such as creating a collaborative discourse to raise ideas, setting specific goals for writing, relying on prior knowledge to substantiate the argument, and becoming familiar with linguistic ways of creating and establishing a dialogue with one’s readers.

***Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research***

The current study was based on a small population of eight teachers, thereby limiting its external validity. Accordingly, the issues raised in this study should be investigated in more classes, at other ages, and in other contexts. Given the innovative value of this study, it is important to repeat the study design, examine the findings further, and use additional methodologies to generalize the findings and draw valid conclusions.

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Appendix 1

**Indicators for Evaluation of Argumentative Text**

| **Details** | **Very large extent 4 points** | **Large extent 3 points** | **Somewhat 2 points** | **Small extent 1 point** | **Not at all 0 points** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Extent of appropriateness of text (content and structure) for topic and purpose of writing Total: 8 points** | | | | | |
| 1. The writer presented h/her references in accordance with the *topic indicated in the assignment* | References accord with the *topic* indicated in the assignment optimally and to a large extent | References accord with the *topic* indicated in the assignment | References accord somewhat with the *topic* indicated in the assignment | One may understand implicitly that the writer made h/her references in accordance with the topic indicated in the assignment. | The writer made no reference whatsoever to the topic indicated in the assignment. |
| 2. The writer presented h/her references in accordance with the *genre indicated in the assignment*. | References accord with the genre indicated in the assignment *optimally and to a large extent* | References accord with the genre indicated in the assignment | References accord somewhat with the genre. For example, the writer does present not a clear argument but a vague dual position, or presents an argument without persuasive and relevant reasoning, or uses indicators of a position but does not relate soundly to the other properties of the genre. | The writer makes weak reference ot the genre, sometimes implicitly and not overtlyh. | The writer presents references that do not accord with the genre. |
| **Producing a complete and self-standing unit of discourse (components of structure)  Total: 20 points** | | | | | |
| 3. *Beginning of the text*—the writer presents the *topic* and the communicative *context* (circumstances of writing) explicitly, clearly, and logically for any reader including one who is unfamiliar with the assignment. | 1. The writer presented the topic and the context indicated in the assignment *explicitly, broadly, and in detail.* | * The writer presented the topic and the context indicated in the assignment explicitly. | The writer presented the topic and/or the context indicated in the assignment partly. | The writer presented a context of some kind (sometimes implicitly) and referred to the topic. | The writer presented no context whatsoever for h/her writing. |
| 4. *Body of the text—*the writer presents an argumentative unit including an argument, reasoning, and relevant and credible explanations and examples in support of the reasoning. | The argumentative unit includes all components: an argument and expanded and detailed reasoning or at least 2 rationales accompanied by elaboration or support, or an argument and a counterclaim accompanied by expanded rationales tailored to each claim. | The argumentative unit includes an argument and at least one rationale in support of it and is accompanied by an example or an explanation, or an argument and several logical, credible, and relevant rationales without elaboration. | The argumentative unit includes an argument and at least one logical and credible rationale but offers no credible, appropriate, and/or persuasive elaboration | The argumentative unit includes only an argument or an irrelevant claim, or an argument and a weak rationale, or an implicit claim in accordance with the rationales. | The argument-tative unit offers no explicit claim and reasoning whatsoever. |
| 5. *Conclusion of the text*—the writer presents h/her position as the writer in the Conclusion. | The conclusion presents the writer’s stance in general terms, rephrasing the clami and not repeating it in the same words and referring to multiple aspects of the rationale that emphasize and support the writer’s stance. | The conclusion presents the writer’s stance and relates to elements that emphasize and support it, or phrases the claim in a manner similar to the wording presented earlier, with reference to elements of the rationale or *accompanied* by presentation of recommendations based on the rationale. | The conclusion presents the writer’s stance with limited reference to elements of the rationale or presents the stance and augments it with new and not previously mentioned information. | The conclusion presents the writer’s stance much as the claim is presented in a code text, or offers a recommendation *only* or an explicit reference to an outcome of persuasion that expresses the writer’s intention of influencing the reader. | The writer presents no conclusion whatsoever. |
| 6. The writer presents a *dilemma* related to the topic. | The writer presents a dilemma related to the topic in *exact* terms and *at length*. | The writer presents a dilemma related to the topic explicitly and topically (usually as a question). | The writer presents a dilemma partially. | The writer does not present a dilemma explicitly but it is implied from the text. | The writer presents no dilemma at all. |
| 7. The writer’s argument is clearly worded for any reader (including one who has not seen the assignment). | The writer presents the argument clearly and explicitly *to a large extent* and in accordance with the requirements of the assignment. | The write present the argument clearly, explicitly, and in accordance with the assignment. Sometimes the argument includes a qualification that augments or strengthens the position. | The writer presents the argument partially or in a way that is neither explicit nor clear, or presents two clearly worded arguments as h/her own. | The writer presents the argument weakly or implicitly, or presents a clear argument but changes h/her mind later and does not reinforce h/her argument. | The writer presents no argument at all. |
| **Orientation to the reader and use of dialogic methods  (Evidence that the writer is aware of the readers’ presence and dialogues with them)**  **Total: 8 points** | | | | | |
| 8. Consideration of the reader’s knowledge—the writer explains and expands on matters that s/he thinks the readers should know about the topic. | The writer inserts, *to a very large extent,* information for the reader in an attempt to explain, reinforce, and clarify the contents of the writing and, in particular, the writer’s position. | The writer inserts information for the reader in an attempt to explain and clarify the writing and the writer’s position. | The writer inserts *some* information for the reader in an attempt to explain and clarify the writing or adds sentences meant to clarify the contents of the writing, but does so insufficiently (e.g., advice, recommendations, or expressing a hope). | The writer turns directly to the reader in order to gear h/her remarks to the reader but does not add crucial information that would clarify h/her position, or presents minor details from which an orientation toward the reader is implied. | The wroter presents a position and explanations but appears insufficiently unaware of the reader’s presence and knowledge. |
| 9. Orientation to the reader by means of dialogic methods—the writer gears h/her remarks to the reader by using dialogic expressions such as questions: rhetorical questions, asking the reader questions, using structures of contrast or concession; taking positions or offering counter-positions—but, however, admittedly, even though, nevertheless; and use of rhetorical devices and wordplay to attract the reader’s attention and attempt to persuade h/her. | Many dialogic manifestations are aimed at the reader clearly and explicitly. | Dialogic manifestations aimed at the reader appear. | Linguistic manifestations appear that may indicate an attempt to dialogue with the reader, but their use contributes little to establishing such a dialogue. | Several linguistic manifestations of dialogue with the reader appear. | No linguistic manifestations of dialogue with the reader appear |
| **Maximization of content and reinforcement of overall rationale**  **Total: 32 points** | | | | | |
| 10. The writer presents *logical, diverse, credible, and appropriate* reasoning that fits and reinforces h/her position. | The writer explains h/her position broadly, logically, credibly, and appropriately. S/he provides broad reasoning, fitting and adequate explanations, and relevant and not made-up examples that support h/her argument and reinforce h/her reasoning. | The writer provides at least two logical, credible, and contentually different rationales that correspond to h/her position but rails to develop the most relevant rationale adequately. | The writer offers two rationales but at least one of them is insufficiently credible, accurate, or convincing, or offers one rationale built of two parts that are contentually related in a manner that fits the argument. | The writer offers a rationale that is poorly suited or inadequate in terms of quantity and quality, e.g., weak in terms of examples that reinforce the argument explicitly. | The writer offers no rationales or offers a rational that is very weak or irrelevant and poorly suited. |
| 11. The rationales are broad and accompanied by detail, explanation, or example that fits the argument. | The writer offers, to a very large extent, appropriate and adequate explanations, carefully chosen examples,. Rich details, and true and credible evidence that support the argument and reinforce the rationales. | The writer provides appropriate and adequate explanations and credible explanations that support the argument and reinforce the rationales. | The writer provides a rationale that is quantitatively appropriate but does not expand on it in a way that is relevant and sufficient to persuade the reader. | The writer provides a rationale that is quantitatively and/or qualitatively inadequate, or the reasoning, explanations, or examples that accompany the rationales are unconvincing or inaccurate. | The writer does not accompany h/her rationales with explanations, detail, or examples at all. |
| 12. The writer presents a clear and sound relation between h/her argument and h/her rationale. | The logical relation between the argument and the rationale is clearly presented and stsrongly visible to the reader. | The logical relation between the argument and the rationale is demonstrated by means of appropriate conjunctions. | The relation between the argument and the rationale is neither explicit nor clear. Sometimes the logical relation between the argument and the rationale is implicit. | The relation between the writer’s argument and the rationale is hard to detect throughout the writing. The writer’s main argument and the rationale that supports it are hard to identify, or the writer’s declared position in the text changes in the course of the text and the relation between the argument and the rationale is vague. | No relation between argument and rationale is shown. |
| 13. The writer presents positions opposed to h/her own. | The writer presents a position/s opposing h/her own *overtly, explicitly, accurately, and clearly.* | The writer presents a position opposing h/her own. | The writer notes the existence of opposing positions but presents only one position (h/her own) explicitly. | The writer provides *implicit* information about possible opposing positions. | The writer neither presents nor relates to opposing positions. |
| 14. The writer offers rationales that relate to the opposing position. | The writer offers a broad, diverse, logical, and credible rationale that fits the view opposed to h/her own, which is presented in the text. | The writer offers a logical rationale that fits the opposing view. | The writer provides at least one logical and credible rationale that fits the opposing view, which is presented in the text. | The writer provides *implicit* information about possible countering rationales. | The writer provides no counter-arguments whatsoever. |
| 15. The writer presents rationales that address the opposing argument by means of a logical connection of contrast/concession, making it clear to the reader why s/he prefers h/her position and none other. | The writer presents, to a large, extent, rationales relating to the opposing position by using words of contrast or concession such as “admittedly,” “but,” “in contrast,” “notwithstanding,” “even though,” etc., making it clear to the reader why s/he prefers h/her position and none other. | The writer presents parts of the rationale that relate to the opposing position by using syntactic elements that attest to opposition; it is still clear why s/he prefers h/her position and none other. | The writer presents rationales that relate to the opposing position by using structures of contrast or concession, but not in a way that would reinforce h/her position, e.g., by using a one-hand/other hand structure or using a concession structure inaccurately | Implicit reference to an opposing position is detectable. | The writer presents no opposing rationales by means of structures of contrast. |
| 16. The writer demonstrates a connection among the rationales that reinforce h/her position as a writer. | The writer presents an explicit, closely reasoned, and logical connection among the rationales, thus also persuading the reader by using connective syntax and repeating words. | The writer presents a connection among the rationales by using connective syntax and repeating words. | The writer presents a partial connection among the rationales by using connective syntax and repeating words. | The writer presents a loose connection among the rationales. | The writer presents no connection among the rationales. |
| 17. The conclusion (in the conclusion of the text) is logically derived from the rationale. | The writer presents an explicit and clear conclusion logically derived from the rationale and supportive of h/her position. The conclusion is worded differently from the argument presented at the beginning of the text and includes information based on the rationale. | The writer presents a clear conclusion that is partly couched in words other and different from those of the argument. | The writer presents a partial conclusion, i.e., repeats the argument along with a recommendation based on h/her main argument. | The writer presents the argument once again, verbatim, or offers only a recommendation based on the argumenta nd the rationale. | No conclusion logically derived from the rationale is offered. |
| **Cohesiveness of the text**  **Total: 4 points** | | | | | |
| 18. The text flows smoothly. The ideas and topics that appear in the text are connected such that the reader finds them acceptable and logically understandable. | The ideas and topics presented in the text are organized such that the reader will understand the topic *well.* The ideas are interconnected and flow logically and clearly even without organizing words that signal the beginning or end of the presentation (e.g., first, second, finally). | The ideas and topics presented in the text are organized such that the reader will understand the topic. | The ideas and topics presented in the text are *partly* organized such that the reader cannot understand the topic easily. The text is not clear enough and does not properly convey the ideas that are needed for an understanding of the topic. Examples: the text repeats itself in ways that generate superfluity. Digressive information appears. The flow of ideas is choppy because it is accompanied by unnecessary conjunctions that are supposed to signal to the reader what is about to follow (e.g., “Here are my rationales,” “Here are some examples.” | The ideas are organized in a way that confuses the reader. Sometimes the text offers very scanty information, forcing the reader to fill in gaps and struggle to understand easily who or what is being discussed, or the connection among the ideas is left unclear. | The writer skips randomly from point to point and forces the reader to jump around in order to follow the argument. |
| **Connectivity**  **Total: 4 points** | | | | | |
|  | 19. The text contains *appropriate* linguistic elements (adequate and not superfluous) that link its various segments. | Good connectivity is attained by use of appropriate connective wording, mentions, and alternative phrasing that help the reader to hold matters together. | The text is largely connected by means of connective wording, mentions, and alternative phrasing. | The text makes inadequate (superfluous or overly narrow) use of connective wording and mentions | The text does not make use of connective wording and the sequence of the argument is hard to understand. |
| **Vocabulary  Total: 4 points** | | | | | |
| 20. The writer uses a varied and precise vocabulary along with *a style attuned to the genre,* the context of the assignment, and the contents. | The vocabulary is varied and precise; *high-register words are used extensively,* and thestyle fits the genre. Use of words of persuasion is evident. | The vocabulary is precise, varied, and suited to the genre. | Colloquiel and unsound language is used. | Slang is used. | The language is sparse, corrupted, and unsound. |