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Third and Fourth Grade Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences About The Writing Process

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Zsarona Calhoun

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Third- and Fourth-Grade Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences About the Writing
Process

by

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MA, Troy University, 2007

BS, Fort Valley State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

According to recent studies, over half of students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades lack the ability to write proficiently on standardized writing assessments. Revealed in recent studies is that many students enter college and are unable to write at the college level, as well as enter the workforce lacking writing skills. The problem is that most grade level students lack writing proficiency, and there is a gap in the literature about the perceptions and experiences elementary teachers have with teaching the writing process. The perceptions faculty have about the writing process may influence their willingness and ability to implement the practice in their classroom. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand the perceptions and experiences third- and fourth-grade teachers have with teaching the writing process, and what they feel they need to be good teachers of the writing process. Six third- and fourth-grade teachers teaching in a southeastern state within the United States were interviewed for this study. Semistructured virtual interviews were conducted through Zoom software. Key findings included (a) differentiation of teaching method, (b) teaching writing was viewed as a challenging experience, (c) impact on student growth, (d) teacher qualities, (e) writing assessments, (f) professional development, (g) self-assessment, (h) time management, and (i) belief in the importance of writing. The study has the potential to promote positive social change by understanding more about teachers' feelings and experiences associated with teaching writing and revealed better methods for implementing writing models, improved professional development, and increases in student writing ability.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to the memory of my loving mother, Barbara Rouseau. She was truly my biggest supporter. I would also like to dedicate my dissertation to Dr. Fred Moore Sr. whose spiritual counsel, encouragement, and prayers helped me along this academic journey.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Purpose.....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Nature of the Study.....	8
Operational Definitions.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Scope and Delimitations.....	10
Limitations.....	12
Significance of the Study.....	12
Summary.....	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	15
Literature Search Strategy.....	15
Conceptual Framework.....	16
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts.....	19
Writing Development.....	19
History of the Writing Process.....	21
State Curriculums and Writing.....	22
The Importance of the Writing Process.....	24

Teachers and the Writing Process.....	27
Teachers’ Perceptions of the Writing Process	31
The Emergence of the Writing Process	31
Teachers’ Experiences with the Writing Process.....	32
Teacher Education Programs	35
Professional Development	36
Resources	40
Student Readiness	41
Summary.....	41
Chapter 3: Methodology	45
Research Design and Rationale	45
Research Methodology	46
Rationale for the Chosen Methodology	47
Role of the Researcher	48
Methodology.....	50
Participant Selection	50
Instrumentation	52
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	53
Data Analysis Plan.....	55
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	55
Credibility	56
Transferability.....	57

Dependability	57
Confirmability.....	58
Ethical Procedures	58
Summary	59
Chapter 4: Results	61
Setting	61
Demographics	63
Data Collection	64
Data Analysis	66
Codes	68
Categories	68
Emergent Themes	69
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	69
Credibility	69
Transferability.....	70
Dependability	70
Confirmability.....	70
Ethical Procedures	71
Results.....	71
Theme I: Self-Assessment (Confidence, Remediation, and Uncertainty)	72
Theme II: Impact (Progressive, Priority, Ineffective, and Model)	73
Theme III: Experiences (Best, Worst, and Future Impact).....	73

Theme IV: Time Management (Personal Management System, School Imposed, and Unstructured).....	74
Theme V: Pre and Post Writing Assessments (Yes, No, and Supplement)	75
Theme VI: Differentiation (Small Group, Ability Group, Model, and Partner).....	76
Theme VII: Professional Development (Essential, Experience, and Neutral)	76
Theme VIII: Teachers’ Best Qualities (Emotional Support, Organization, and Modeling).....	77
Theme IX: Final Thoughts (Importance of Writing and Perseverance)	77
Research Questions Addressed	78
Summary	81
Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations	83
Interpretation of Findings	83
RQ1: What Are Third and Fourth Grade Teachers’ Perceptions of Teaching the Writing Process?	84
RQ2: What Are the Experiences of Third and Fourth Grade With Teaching the Writing Process?	85
RQ3: What Do Third and Fourth Grade Teachers Perceive They Need to Be Good Teachers of the Writing Process?	86
Limitations of the Study.....	87
Recommendations.....	88

Implications.....	89
Conclusion	90
References.....	91
Appendix: Interview Guide.....	110

List of Tables

Table 1. Culham’s Writing Trait Descriptions	7
Table 2. Demographics of Data Sample	64
Table 3. Example Codes, Categories, and Themes.....	67

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Writing has remained a valued proficiency within our society, yet many students struggle with the task (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). Dockrell et al. (2019) found that most elementary students struggle with writing. Writing is a part of most school curriculums across the United States and learning to read and write are necessary skills students are expected to master (Sundeen, 2015); however, most students emerge from high school lacking the skills needed to write fluently (NCES, 2019). Doubet and Southall (2018) maintained that the knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of teachers in teaching the writing process could impact students' writing progress. In this study, I sought to explore elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching writing, their experiences in teaching the writing process to students, what strategies they feel are best practices, and what they need to be good teachers of the writing process. This chapter includes background knowledge for the study, the problem statement, purpose and problem statements, and the theoretical framework of the study. The research questions and nature of the study are also stated in the chapter.

Background

Many students enter colleges and universities lacking the ability to write at the college level. Quora and Zahran (2018) suggested that without the basic writing skills needed for success, students face difficulties with writing as they reach college. Students' lack of writing proficiency on standardized writing assessments in fourth, eighth, and 12th grades reveal the widespread problem students have across the United States with writing (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2017). More than 70% of

students in eighth and 12th grades lack the ability to write proficiently (A. Kent & Brannan, 2016).

The teacher is at the helm of teaching writing within schools in the United States. Writing is a complex, multifaceted skill that requires explicit instruction by a trained teacher (Curtis, 2017). Teachers' perceptions and experiences about the writing process are critical to meeting the needs of students. Classroom instruction can be strongly impacted by the thoughts and beliefs teachers have concerning the subjects taught and ways in which teaching takes place (Chia & Christine, 2016). A. Kent and Brannan (2016) stated that teachers must create learning environments to build students' confidence and competence as writers early in formal schooling. According to Korth et al. (2017), there is a dearth of information about the value teachers place on writing and the impact teacher beliefs have on their writing instruction.

The challenges students face with writing may persist if the negative perceptions and experiences some educators have towards writing do not improve. English Language Arts teachers are inadequately prepared to teach writing (Kohnen et al., 2019). After students graduate high school, many attend colleges, enter the workforce, or both. Whichever path students choose, writing is an essential skill and schools should prioritize writing as a subject matter (A. Kent & Brannan, 2016). The perceptions teachers have about the writing experience and their experiences in teaching the writing process can be influential in helping students learn how to write. Zumbrunn et al. (2017) stated that teachers send messages, both implicit and explicit, about their own beliefs about writing in the classroom, and students' perceptions of these messages are often tied to student

motivation and engagement. Little research has been conducted to understand teacher perceptions about the writing process. Hall and White (2019) contended that to provide a well-rounded education to all students, it is important for teachers to reflect on how their attitudes towards writing affect their teaching. Teachers' attitudes towards writing can have an effect on students' chances to pursue and enjoy every subject with equal vigor (Hall & White).

Problem Statement

Elementary teachers' attitudes and perceptions about the writing process and teaching the writing process could impact students' writing achievement (Doubet & Southall, 2018). Obtaining a greater understanding of elementary teachers' experiences with, and perspectives about teaching the writing process can inform the development and implementation of instructional strategies and update teacher training and professional development (Doubet & Southall, 2018; Henderson et al., 2017; Slapak-Barski, & Edmonds, 2017). The attitude of the teacher towards the writing process will most likely be evident in the way he/she instructs the task. Cook and Sams (2018) found teachers' approach towards writing and literacy influences how teachers feel about literacy and literacy instruction. Researchers (Brindle et al., 2016) reported three out of four elementary educators felt their colleges' teacher education programs provided little to no instruction on how to teach writing. Confident writing teachers may help build confident writers (Wahleithner, 2018). Some studies indicate a higher self-efficacy for teachers in teaching writing leads to higher quality writing instruction, which leads to better student performance (Hall et al., 2015; Koster et al., 2017). Teacher perceptions,

beliefs, and attitudes about their teaching can influence their instructional practice and impact student learning. The problem is that most grade level students lack writing proficiency and there is a gap in the literature about the perceptions and experiences elementary teachers have about the writing process.

Most grade level students lack the skill to write proficiently. The NCES (2019) found that despite the importance of writing in and out of the classroom, many students within the United States have not mastered the skills necessary for proficient or grade level appropriate writing. According to the NCES, in 2011, 24% of students in grades eight and 12 performed at the Proficient level in writing; 54% of eighth grade and 52% of 12th grade students performed at the Basic level; and only 3% of eighth grade and 12th grade students performed at the Advanced level. In the most recent reports from the NCES, the NAEP (2017) revealed a continued pattern of lower performance for students in 2017; NCES is currently analyzing students' most recent writing scores, as they want to ensure reliability and validity due to the implementation of word processing software (NCES, 2019). Given the importance of writing ability, researchers seek to better understand what impacts student acquisition of literacy skill; however, while much attention is focused on children's early reading development, children's writing development is studied less frequently (White et al., 2016). I proposed that third- and fourth-grade teachers be included in the study for the following reasons: (a) beginning about third grade, student cognition grows considerably and writing development moves from letter recognition, sight words, and simple paragraph construction to short essays

(Culham, 2005); (b) the NAEP (2019) established a writing achievement level at the fourth-grade.

Purpose

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore third- and fourth-grade elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching writing, their experiences in teaching the writing process to students, what strategies they feel are best practices, and what they need to be good teachers of the writing process. Having a greater understanding of elementary teachers' experiences and perceptions in relation to teaching the writing process is important for advancing instructional strategies and informing teacher training and professional development (Doubet & Southall, 2018; Henderson et al., 2017; Slapak-Barski, & Edmonds, 2017). The education system of the southeastern state where this study took place endeavored to prepare students to be effective communicators and writers. Twenty-first century employers expect employees to possess strong reading and writing skills, and students need good writing schools for academic success in postsecondary education. Data about elementary teachers' perceptions and experiences as a teacher of the writing process may inform evidence-based instructional practices for teachers in schools within the state where this study was conducted.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of teaching the writing process?

RQ2: What are the experiences of third- and fourth-grade teachers with teaching the writing process?

RQ3: What do third- and fourth-grade teachers perceive they need in order to be good teachers of the writing process?

Conceptual Framework

The cognitive process teacher model (Clark & Peterson, 1984) served as the primary conceptual framework for this study. This model showed how a teacher's thoughts could determine behaviors in the classroom (Clark & Peterson). The cognitive process teacher model was used to explore how elementary teachers' perceive and experience the writing process and how these perceptions and experiences impact the way teachers implement the writing process with their students. It is important to examine elementary teachers' thoughts and behaviors with teaching the writing process, as well as how their thoughts and experiences impact their teaching of the writing process. Teachers' beliefs largely affect the way they think, plan, and make decisions (Clark & Peterson). This model is discussed more in Chapter 2.

Culham's 6+1 traits writing model (Culham, 2018) served as a secondary conceptual framework for this study. Quora and Zahran (2018) explained that the 6+1 traits model is based on a set of rubrics that assess different characteristics of a written work. The underlying premise of the model is that writers have control over the essential traits of their writing through the logic of their thinking, insight about the topic, writing skill shaped by experience, and the final draft derived through effort (Quora & Zahran). My understanding of Culham's writing traits is described in Table 1.

Table 1*Culham's Writing Trait Descriptions*

Traits	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word choice	Sentence fluency	Conventions and presentation
Descriptions	The meaning and development of the message	Internal structure of the piece	Tone of the piece	Vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning	The flow of words and phrases throughout the text	The mechanical correctness and overall appearance of the work

Note. Each writing trait is defined within the table from Culham (2005).

The goal of the model is to guide teachers in helping students develop critical thinking skills about their writing. A series of steps are imbedded in the model that include the following: prewriting, drafting, sharing, revising, editing, and publishing. Educators use the 6+1 traits model to align instruction and assessment. Teachers use the model to help students understand how the traits of writing interact to create good writing (Quora & Zahran, 2018).

The 6+1 traits model is a tool to help teachers with writing instruction and can be used to determine teacher implementation of writing strategies. Nauman et al. (2011) determined that teachers' underlying attitudes and beliefs about what constituted good writing impacted their assessment of students' writing; however, a search for research on elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching the writing process and their experiences with teaching the writing process returns few results. While there is published research investigating the efficacy of the 6+1 traits model, there is little research on what teachers think and feel about teaching the writing process using the 6+1 traits model (Collopy & Arnold, 2017). Studies that focus on elementary teacher's use of Culham's best practices

to teach the writing process indicate successful widespread use in classrooms (Miller et al., 2016). Culham's model is explained more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

A basic qualitative method was implemented to explore elementary teachers' perceptions and experiences as a teacher of the writing process. Qualitative research is a method to understand the lived experiences of individuals (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Key elements of the human experience are captured in qualitative research through data such as interviews, field notes, recordings, photographs, and memos to self (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2014) believed the qualitative method allows for the exploration of the real-world lived experiences of the participants being studied. For the purposes of this study, the lived experiences of teachers in their role of teaching the writing process can be explored for better understanding of how the event unfolds and their interactions with students.

Interviews with elementary teachers were the sole data collection tool used in this study. Six elementary teachers from third- and fourth-grade were participants in this study. Out of precautions for COVID-19, interviews were conducted using the Zoom video conferencing platform. The research questions guided the development of interview questions and inquiry. Exploration and understanding the meaning people make of a social or human problem are two goals of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Exploring teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers of the writing process and describing their experiences of teaching writing is aligned with the qualitative nature of the study. Collecting the statements of belief and feeling from

the teachers provided the opportunity to analyze their rich expressions of their experiences. As the research evolved, a variety of themes emerged. Qualitative research consists of a set of material practices that make the world more visible and can lead to world transformations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Operational Definitions

Common Core State Standards: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of high-quality standards in mathematics and English-language arts (CCSS Initiative, 2020).

Conventions: Conventions involve editing and preparing the piece for the reader (Culham, 2005).

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is one's belief or lack of belief that one can bring about a personal outcome or change (Bandura, 1977).

Sentence fluency: Sentence fluency means that sentences are well-written and easy to read aloud (Culham, 2005).

Standardized assessments: "Standardized assessments are empirically developed evaluation tools with established statistical reliability and validity" (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2021).

Voice: Voice is the tone of the piece (Culham, 2005).

Writing Process: "The writing process is an approach to teaching writing that is based on the way students and professionals write which include stages such as prewriting, composing, revising, editing, and publishing" (Gunning, 2000, p. 419).

Zone of proximal development: The zone of proximal development is the space between what students can do independently and the potential of what students can do with help from an adult or peer who is more capable of providing guidance (Gunning, 2000).

Assumptions

Researchers may bring ingrained beliefs and attitudes into their work. Creswell and Poth (2018) advocated the importance of exploring one's philosophical assumptions to better understand the potential influences those assumptions may have on the research. Within my study, I had three assumptions. First, I assumed that all participants who provided information for this study would provide true and honest answers of their perceptions and experiences with the writing process. Second, I assumed that participants would take time to reflect on their responses throughout their interviews. Finally, I assumed that each participant would not be reluctant to share their perceptions and experiences with the writing process due to researcher judgment.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study refers to the parameters under which the study will be operating (Simon & Goes, 2018). For this qualitative study, I employed semistructured interviews with elementary teachers involved in teaching the writing process to collect information related to the research questions designed to explore their experiences and perspectives. Semistructured interviews with six third- and fourth-grade elementary teachers was the data collection method for this study. These semistructured interviews were conducted within a southeastern state with six third- and fourth-grade teachers who

were responsible for teaching the writing process. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling congruent with qualitative research methods that sought to obtain rich data from individuals that were knowledgeable and experienced in the phenomena being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interviewees were selected using a criterion of third- and fourth-grade teachers having taught writing at least three years and recruited through networking with school faculty, staff, and administration. Recruitment of participants ended when data saturation of information was achieved; it was anticipated that at least 10 teachers would be interviewed; however, due to unforeseen circumstances, six teachers participated in this study. Third- and fourth-grade teachers were chosen as desired participants because the writing expectations of students increases at the third grade and the National Assessment of Writing Progress establishes the first achievement level at Grade 4.

The delimitations of a study are those characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of a study and by the exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made during the development of the study plan (Simon & Goes, 2018). Delimitations result from choices made by the researcher such as objectives, variables of interest, theoretical perspectives, and the choice of participants (Simon & Goes, 2018). This study was limited to elementary teachers who taught the writing process. The researcher focused solely on their experiences and perceptions of the writing process. The study's findings were applicable to furthering the understanding of the teaching of the writing process with implications for training and embedded professional development.

Limitations

Characteristics of the study design or method that may impact the generalizability of the research findings are considered limitations of the study. Price and Murnan (2004) advised that acknowledging the limitations of a study provides the researcher an opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking about the research problem, literature, and method. One limitation of this study was the small sample size selected from elementary schools within a southeastern state. The small sample size may not be large enough to generalize to a larger population. Cultural differences that may exist within this southeastern state may not be representative of other regions of the United States. A second limitation was that data collected within a short time span, rather than a long longitudinal study, did not allow an understanding of change or stability over time. My feelings about the importance of writing was a third weakness of the study. It was imperative that I respected the participants' responses and guarded against influencing responses or interpreting data based on my own bias.

Significance of the Study

More than half of students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 are unable to write proficiently (NAEP, 2017). Advancing the understanding of the writing process from the teachers' point of view can unlock knowledge about effective strategies for teaching writing (Nauman et al., 2011). A literature search for teachers' perceptions about teaching writing returns few results. This study filled a gap in understanding elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching writing, their experiences in teaching the writing process to students, what strategies they felt were best practices, and what they needed to be good

teachers of the writing process. Obtaining a greater understanding of elementary teachers' experiences with, and perspectives and beliefs about, teaching the writing process can inform the development and implementation of instructional strategies and update teacher training and professional development (Doubet & Southall, 2018; Henderson et al., 2017; Slapak-Barski, & Edmonds, 2017)

Collecting information about teachers' perceptions and experiences of teaching writing can help clarify what teachers are doing in the classroom that is effective in helping their students master writing, and what challenges and barriers teachers feel they face in teaching writing skills. Exploring elementary teachers' perceptions and experiences as a teacher of the writing process has the potential to illuminate the writing process from the teachers' point of view and enrich the body of data about teaching (Hall et al., 2015; Henderson et al., 2017). Alter et al. (2013) believed that examining teacher perceptions enhanced research on teacher practices and student learning which strengthens the field of education.

Results of research on teachers' perceptions of the writing process have the potential to benefit teachers at the local level by increasing the knowledge of what works at individual schools (Casey et al., 2016). The findings from this study may provide school and district administrators with information for better planning of professional development activities and budgeting decisions (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Larson & Marsh, 2014). Researchers have commented that implementing research-based techniques for teaching writing has the potential to promote positive social change by enhancing the foundation of student writing skills for personal communication, analytical

thinking, historical record keeping, scientific documentation, business contracts, or abstract literary expression (Avidon, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Summary

Skill in writing is necessary for students to function successfully at school, in the world at large, and in their personal lives. Writing is a fundamental part of engaging in professional, social, community, and civic activities (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2018). Writing skills are an essential part of the learning process that happens in the classroom starting in the earliest grades. Young children's writing skills are critical to their overall literacy development (Zhang & Quinn, 2018). Teachers who teach the writing process have an enormous responsibility to their students in helping them develop their writing skills. Research findings validate the key role teachers have in teaching the writing process. This qualitative research study seeks to explore elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching writing, their experiences in teaching the writing process to students, what strategies they feel are best practices, and what they need to be good teachers of the writing process.

In Chapter 2, I include a detailed review of the literature examining the perceptions of teachers about the writing process. The challenges teachers face when trying to implement the writing process are identified and the training that teachers received on teaching writing are explained. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion about how writing is currently being taught in elementary schools.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Over half of students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 lack writing proficiency (NAEP, 2017). Some of the earliest experiences of teaching writing can be traced back as early as the 16th century, when writing was largely taught to support reading (Wyse, 2018). Wyse (2018) explained that imitation, which was widely used by teachers, involved students copying and reproducing text. Teachers' philosophy of writing was heavily reliant on imitation. Imitation was not simply a classroom exercise, but a whole way of thinking that was taken for granted by many teachers (Wyse, 2018). The historical traditions and building blocks of writing could have an impact on the modern elementary teacher's perceptions and experiences with writing. Ginty et al. (2016) found that more than 30 years since the writing process entered classrooms, teachers still struggle with teaching the process to students. This traditional form of writing may not have been in the best interest of the student. Smith (2018) stated that traditional writing lacks the sensitivity and appreciation for children's abilities as language users and learners. Writing pedagogy should allow the students freedom to express their ideas through print (Emig, 1971). Graves (1983) believed children should have freedom during the writing process which led to his introduction of writing workshops that encouraged students to generate ideas, leading to the creation of a finished piece.

Literature Search Strategy

This literature review was conducted through the aid of several professional databases such as Education Source, ERIC, SAGE Journals, EBSCO Discovery Service, and ProQuest Central. The National Writing Project and the National Assessment of

Education Statistics sites were also used to conduct research. These databases and websites helped me find scholarly material that aligned with my topic. Terms entered into the databases to acquire information on my topic were *writing process, zone of proximal development, self-efficacy, the 6+1 Traits of Writing Model, students' writing performance, Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and writing teachers' perceptions.*

My readings expanded to other related topics and research reviewed by experts in the fields of *history of writing development, writing instruction, and professional development.* I also searched the literature for research on qualitative method and inquiry as it applies to the research design of this study. The primary resources utilized were Google Scholar, ERIC, and the Walden online library. I created digital folders on my computer for each concept to organize the literature sources.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was supported by the cognitive process model and the 6+1 writing traits model guided the exploration of the research questions. The origin of one of the first studies conducted to describe the way teachers' think and behave is reported in *Life in Classrooms* (Jackson, 1968). Research on teachers' cognitive processes and actions gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. Clark and Peterson (1984) enhanced the research on teacher-thinking and actions with the development of the cognitive process teacher model. Clark and Peterson explained that the cognitive process teacher model shows how a teachers' thoughts affect his/her behaviors in the classroom and is divided into two parts; constraints and opportunities. These components are affected by teachers' cognition and behaviors (Clark & Peterson, 1984). The

constraint portion of the model consists of teachers' thought processes, decision making, and lesson planning, whereas the opportunities portion of the model consists of teachers' actions and their effects, such as teachers' and students' behaviors in the classroom, and student achievement (Clark & Peterson, 1984). The model provides an explanation of the way a teacher's thinking can impact his/her behavior in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1984). This thought process model helped explain the way a teacher felt about teaching the writing process impacted the way she implemented the writing process with his/her students. Clark (as cited in Contreras et al., 2020) found that understanding teacher planning means that one understands the way a teacher transforms and interprets knowledge. The way a teacher organizes her plans for implementing the writing process within his/her class is reflective of the way he/she feels about writing. The study of the thinking processes of teachers, which includes organization and interpretation, can lead to processes that guide and determine their behavior (Clark & Yinger, 1977). The perceptions and experiences of the teacher with writing impacts student achievement. The key to increasing student achievement is to maximize the time students are actively instructed by the teacher (Brophy, 2010).

In addition to the cognitive factors that may influence teacher perceptions of the writing process, it is important to discuss one of the most widely used writing process models. Prior to the implementation of the CCCS, writing instruction was very different than it is presently. Decades ago, writing instruction focused primarily on handwriting skills. In 2002, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories (NWREL) began work to improve writing instruction in the elementary classroom (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2004).

NWREL research findings indicated problems with students' writing abilities (Kozlow & Bellamy). The research goal was to develop a writing program that was built on the current instruction that emphasized grammar, mechanics, and a writing process.

Elementary teachers are faced with the complex responsibility of teaching students to engage in the writing process. Collopy and Arnold (2017) found that adapting to students' individual needs is critical when implementing the writing process thus neglecting to craft writing instruction that meets the needs of individual may exacerbate writing difficulties. The origin of the 6+1 Traits of writing model emerged from Culham's observations of her own son's frustrations with the writing process (Culham, 2005). The model is designed around seven main attributes: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation (Culham, 2005). Each attribute has a scoring rubric designed to align with each writing trait. Culham (2005) believed the value in the framework was found in examining the role writing traits play as writers progress through the writing process and become increasingly more confident and fluent in their writing. Each attribute is also designed to inform and prepare students for each component of the writing process. The overall goal of the model is to make writing more enjoyable for students (Culham, 2005).

The premise of the 6+1 Traits of Writing model is to promote writing achievement and nurture critical thinking among students. Bridges (2011) found that a breakthrough was formed through writing instruction and assessment and that, as a result, teachers have been enabled to become better at teaching writing and enabled students to become skilled, effective, and thoughtful writers. Each trait within the model is aligned

with an assessment that allows the teacher to assess any genre of writing students choose. There is a distinct method of assessing the main characteristics of writing independent one from another that is embedded in the model (Culham, 2005). The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2018) found that a focus on specific traits of writing may give students and teachers a shared framework and vocabulary to identify and discuss strengths and weaknesses. Attention on specific writing traits allows teachers and students to form a plan for revision of an essay and to build skills in a certain aspect of writing. The assessment stage follows the revision process whereby the student edits to produce a piece aligned with the 6+1 traits.

The cognitive process teacher model and the 6+1 Traits Model were used to focus on exploring teachers' perceptions of teaching the writing process. The 6+1 model is similar to the basic writing process model which is used expansively across the United States and the elementary schools where the study took place. The models supported the research questions by examining the world of the teacher in teaching writing and how they felt about the experience. The models were integral in forming interview questions that explored teachers' perceptions and experiences, and in the data analysis of interview responses.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Writing Development

Writing development can emerge from children as early as 18 months. Rowe (2018) observed that 18-month-old writers used marks to represent things other than themselves. Dyson et al. (as cited in Rowe, 2018) uncovered a consensus among early

literacy researchers that young children's writing involves weaving together a variety of sign systems, including talk, writing, and dramatic play to make meaning of their marks. Evidence of a child's writing development can be seen through their use of gesturing, Vygotsky found that gesturing is the initial visual sign in which the future writing of the child is contained (Rowe, 2018). Gesturing is a precursor to a child's language development. Rowe (2018) established that "gesturing provides a foundation to increasingly complex linguistic constructions" (p. 18).

As early as primary school, students are tasked with forming letters and writing one syllable words. Hall and White (2019) stated that early composition activities enhance phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness which are associated linked to reading and writing fluency. Primary and elementary teachers have the responsibility of helping students enhance their writing development through organization of ideas, increasing the sophistication of vocabulary and syntax, and encouraging a more demanding rigor of writing (CCSS Initiative, 2020).

From kindergarten through 12th grade, students are faced with expectations for writing and are expected to perform the skills described in the language of the standards. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understanding mastered in preceding grades (CCSS Initiative, 2020). Among the writing standards at the elementary level, students are expected to write original pieces from each genre of writing with guidance and support (CCSS Initiative, 2020). Although the writing standards at the middle and high school level are similar to elementary standards, students in advanced grade levels

must write more independently and their writing must demonstrate increased complexity and mastery of the writing standards. Writing standards are prevalent throughout each state's curriculum within the United States. Teachers instruct, guide, and encourage students' writing development.

History of the Writing Process

Moffett (1982) believed that the substance of writing transcends beyond copying, transcribing, plagiarizing, and paraphrasing, but involves students' meditating and transcribing his/her innermost thoughts. Throughout the 16th century, writing lacked student-voice. During this period and for centuries afterwards, students were taught to copy and reproduce text (Shayer, 1972). Many philosophers of writing began to voice their perceptions on the value in allowing student-writing to become personable and individualized. Emig (1977) believed as students were mostly expressing themselves verbally, it was necessary to be able to express themselves through writing. Lacking in the traditional form of writing is student authenticity. Smith (2018) stated that traditional writing lacks the sensitivity and appreciation for children's potential to learn and use language. Theorists' beliefs that writing should be more attributable to the thoughts and feelings of the student emerged from the tradition of copying and reproducing text.

Emig (1977) stated that writing serves learning uniquely because writing as process-and-product embodies a cluster of attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies. Emig believed that students should have the freedom to write and learn from writing, Emig's theory of student writing lacked formality and organization, rather the core of her theory for student writing focused on one's language

processing through writing. Writing should logically and theoretically involve contrasts and distinctions between writing and all other verbal language processes (Emig, 1977). Graves (1983) argued that primary/elementary students should have the freedom to develop their own ideas during the writing process workshops and later produce a finished product composed of his/her ideas. As students began to acquire freedom in their writing, teachers were tasked with the responsibility of helping students navigate the writing process as many teachers, prior to the introduction of the writing process in schools, were mostly familiar with teaching students to copy and reproduce text or imitation. Imitation was not simply an isolated classroom experience, but a way of thinking that was taken for granted by many teachers (Wyse, 2018). With the implementation of the writing process, the teachers' role transitioned to the facilitator of writing, rather than authoritarian. The teacher's role became akin to that of an editor (Wyse, 2018). Teachers' new responsibility of teaching the writing process and the expectations for teachers' implementation with the writing process described in state standards and curriculums began to emerge.

State Curriculums and Writing

Engagement in the writing process is a requirement throughout state curriculums across the United States. State and local administrators have expectations for teachers to have students master these writing standards by the school year's end. Though state curriculums include thorough expectations for students' engagement with the writing process, teaching the writing standards outlined in state curriculums could be problematic. Blanch et al. (2017) found that kindergarten through 12th grade standards

represent a spiral curriculum in which the writing process recurred, but the reciprocal and iterative nature of the writing process was not truly addressed. State writing standards are among the building blocks that prepare students for their future once they graduate high school. Writing is the currency of the new workplace and global economy; it is a bridge to the future (National Writing Project, 2020). Therefore, teachers are faced with various pressures to help students master the CCSS. Since this study took place within a southeastern state, I have examined the writing standards for that state. According to this state's department of education, school administrators require students to write narrative, expository, and informative texts with guidance and support before moving to the next grade level.

Teachers must teach the standards aligned with the CCSS amidst the demands of a growing diverse population which includes students who are English language learners (ELLs). With the increase in the number of ELL students and the rigorous requirements imposed by the CCSS, teachers are left unprepared (Johnson & Wells, 2017). The school year involves the strain teachers endure to teach the CCSS with the expectation that students perform satisfactorily on standardized tests. Accountability pressures and the CCSS has created complex demands for teachers (Frank et al., 2020). Many teachers experience burnout as a result of teaching the CCSS while also preparing students to take standardized tests due to the thriving demands of the CCSS. Teachers are challenged with the increased language and literacy demands across the curriculum required by the CCSS (Johnson & Wells, 2017).

The Importance of the Writing Process

The ability to proficiently engage in the writing process is important to the literacy development of students. High quality writing instruction is an important factor in supporting developing writers as they learn to plan, write, compose, and revise text (DeSmedt et al., 2020). Miller et al. (2016) reported that the implementation of the 6+1 Traits Model for a 9-week period within a fourth-grade classroom was followed by an improvement in the students' writing performance. The 6+1 Traits Writing Model can have a significant role in strengthening students' writing proficiency through building sentence fluency, helping to organize one's thoughts and ideas on paper, and the model can also help the student find his/her literary voice. The process of training students to write begins at the elementary school level. Each child needs a certain level of support, first provided by the family, then by early childhood education programs to develop fundamental reading-writing skills and knowledge (Kartal et al., 2016).

The writing process enhances students' communication skills. The revision stage of the writing process helps to develop and strengthen students' communication skills. Revision focuses on having others offer feedback for revising ideas to convey meaning and clarify ideas (Blanch et al., 2017). This skill is most likely not learned without the help or guidance of a teacher or experienced writer.

Engaging in the writing process can motivate students to want to write. Muhammad and Abdel (2019) found that writing motivation plays an influential role in shaping students' writing experiences. The teacher is influential in making the experience a motivational one that the student can use to energize their pathway forward into the

writing process. Students' perceptions of the writing experience can also affect how they see themselves as writers and how they approach writing (Zumbrunn et al., 2017). After students develop motivation for reading and writing, they acquire the skills necessary for effective reading and extend that knowledge to content area applications (Park et al., 2017). When students believe the teacher is taking the content of their writing seriously, then they are motivated to write (Koster et al., 2017). The process of allowing students independence in what they want to write about can help motivate students as well. Hodges (2017) stated that students thrive on the ability to choose their own writing assignments and activities.

Students' reading comprehension is supported by the writing process.

Traditionally, writing and reading have been taught separately. Collins et al. (2017) suggested that due to political views, professional organizations, and pedagogical and developmental perceptions, writing has been taught separately since colonial times; however, Collins et al. maintained that because of the reduced nature of teaching reading and writing to low performing students and the requirement for students to construct written responses to literature questions, reading and writing should be taught concurrently. When students learn to use more sophisticated syntax in their own writing, they become better able to understand it in their own reading (Hochman & Wexler, 2017). Surrounding students with literature helps them understand themselves as writers and can prompt students to want to learn more information on a topic of interest from advanced text. Graves (1983) stated that children need to be surrounded by poetry, stories, information books, biography, science and history, imaginative, and factual books

which helps students with dramatics, problem solving, and precise language as these literature pieces are influential when constructing a writing piece.

Teaching the writing process is a highly complex and cognitive activity that requires the guidance of self-directed activity (Institution of Education Sciences, 2018). Teachers also instruct students to set writing goals for what they want to accomplish, and how to communicate effectively to the audience(s) for whom they are writing (Institution of Education Sciences, 2018). Prewriting, revising, editing, and publishing are the four major components of the writing process. Each component serves as a hierarchal means of support and accountability as the student works towards completing an authentic piece. Syarofi et al. (2018) believed that by getting feedback on the draft from the teacher and class peers, the writer is able to recognize and revise what needs to be improved which could lead to a better quality of writing. While revising and rewriting, students should focus mostly on the transference of their thoughts and the intent of the paper. Throughout the writing process, teachers should encourage students to focus on their thoughts and organize their ideas, rather than grammar and error correction (Smith, 2018). Evolving from the revision stage to the publishing stage allows students to share their writing with their peers. This final stage of writing allows the writer to gain feedback on his/her piece. Gaining feedback from fellow classmates can assist in building one's confidence as a writer. Smith (2018) understood that sharing writing with peers helps the writer build confidence internally and externally. Each block of the writing process helps to define writing's importance on the academic spectrum.

The process approach to writing serves an important role in the reading and writing development of a student. Smith (2018) stated that successes of the writing process approach, such as students who spend more time writing, outperform those in traditional writing programs. Students who use a larger number of process-writing strategies write better and students who were asked by their teachers to write papers longer than one page and once or twice a month wrote better papers (Smith, 2018). Engaging in the writing process has the potential to increase students' reading performance. Hochman and Wexler (2017) stated that "when students learn to use more sophisticated syntax in their own writing, they become better able to understand it when they encounter it in their reading" (p. 33).

Teachers and the Writing Process

Grade level students in the United States are underperforming in the area of writing. According to the most recent writing results data, approximately 30% of America's students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 performed at or above proficient in writing (NAEP, 2017). Underperformance in writing proficiency could be attributed to teachers' lack of consistency and motivation when teaching the writing process. The increasing attention for motivational factors in these theoretical writing models goes hand in hand with empirical findings consistently showing that writing motivation and self-efficacy for writing are positively related to students' writing performance (DeSmedt et al., 2019).

Instructional strategies and learning tasks that facilitate the writing process are repetition, modeling, and feedback. Repetition is important for growth as it allows the learner to practice a skill over time until it becomes easier (Graves, 1983). Modeling the

writing process can have a profound impact on students' growth with writing. Modeling is an important instructional technique that allows teachers to demonstrate and powerfully draw attention to the processes involved in writing and the purposes for writing (Zhang & Quinn, 2018). Teachers are prone to "assign" writing, rather than teach it; yet students need modeling and guided practice if they are to grow as writers (Blanch et al., 2017). Rather than teachers being bystanders while students engage in the writing process, they must offer support, provide feedback, and model writing practice (Hodges, 2017). Constructive teacher feedback helps students become proficient writers. Students benefit from timely, clear, and specific feedback on their writing; and from seeing and trying to imitate what successful writing looks like (Goldstein, 2017).

Teachers are expected to provide guidance and support to students with their writing but may lack the skills needed to effectively help their pupils. Teachers need a deep understanding of language, of process, of pedagogy, and of the interface between them to teach writing effectively (Parr & Wilkinson, 2016). Many teachers lack the skills needed to teach writing effectively which could have a physical and/or emotional impact on teachers' well-being. Teachers' knowledge and beliefs often affect student-outcomes (Howell et al., 2018). Professional development, lack of sufficient knowledge, and time could be among the potential challenges that teachers face while trying to teach students the writing process. Bastug (2016) credited the teaching of writing as among the duties of teachers which lead to teachers' stress, burnout, and anxiety.

Teacher Knowledge about the Writing Process

In an age in which teachers are responsible for teaching writing standards at each grade level and preparing students for standardized assessments which consist of writing, teachers should have sufficient knowledge of the writing process. Dockrell et al. (2019) stated that teachers need to be able to profile pupils developing writing skills so appropriate instruction can be provided. The foundation for the nurture and enhancement of teachers' knowledge of writing could begin as early as their preservice teacher years. The development of a strong platform during this time could be influential to the teacher's ability to teach and convey the necessary skills and concepts of the writing process to students. Trainee teachers should know what writing involves. When teachers lack pedagogical knowledge about writing or do not have skills to use that knowledge in their teaching, there is a negative impact on their ability to teach and assess students' writing (Hussein, 2019).

Teachers' knowledge of the writing process could have an impact on their perceptions of the task. In studies of classroom practice there is the suggestion that most teachers devote little time to the teaching of writing if they feel unprepared to teach writing (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019). Teachers must understand the writing process themselves before they can share with students and develop each student's skills as a writer (Curtis, 2017). Many teachers have stated that their college teacher education courses did not fully train them on the way to teach the writing process (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019). Teachers have reported that they are not adequately prepared to teach writing; their teacher preparation programs spent less time on writing instruction than

reading; and they were not able to translate their learning from teacher education programs into practice (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019).

Time

Time is another factor among the challenges teachers may face when teaching the writing process. In the face of already-full schedules, teachers must be supported, not only to make time for students to write about ideas of their choosing, but also to keep that time sacred (Buckley-Marudas, 2018). Yet, the demands of preparing students to meet state curriculum standards for the year and meet the goals of annual standardized assessments and benchmarks may leave little time to focus on the elements of writing. Graham (2019) found writing to be a neglected skill as a result of 8th-12th students' poor performance with writing over time. One of the main findings which emerged from a 28-day, global study on the teaching of writing was that most teachers spend little time teaching the skill to students (Graham, 2019).

In a review of a report by the National Commission on Writing, Graham (2019) found that students' relatively poor performance over time on standardized writing assessments and other indicators of students' writing skills led the National Commission on Writing to label writing a neglected skill in America. Many teachers spend little time teaching students to write due to lack of sufficient knowledge on teaching writing. M. Ryan et al. (2021) found that "teachers' immersion in writing without direct links to content and pedagogical knowledge and transfer is not sufficient to improve students' attainment of writing skills" (p. 4). Teachers are faced with the demands to teach writing and must allocate time to teach students how to engage in the writing process. Writing is

a complex and challenging task, requiring a considerable amount of instructional time (Graham, 2019). Gaining insight into the teacher's perceptions towards writing could be insightful.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Writing Process

In my literature search, there were few articles on teacher's perceptions of the writing process. Teacher perceptions on writing may change the expectations for writing over time (Sturk & Lindgren, 2019). In the pre-writing process era, elementary students' writing consisted of writing letters of the alphabet, copying, and writing posture (Sturk & Lindgren). Sturk and Lindgren suggested that the pre-writing expectations influenced teachers' perceptions of writing to be aligned more with the writing mechanics of neatness, correct letter formation, and holding a pencil correctly. Currently, students are tasked with more complex expectations for the writing process. Among those expectations are sophisticated mechanics and higher order thinking skills. McCarthy and Woodard (2018) advised that teachers' perceptions on teaching the writing process could influence their approach to teaching students how to write and what is important in the writing process.

The Emergence of the Writing Process

Theorists of the 21st century began to challenge the tradition of writing and propose that writing become authentic to the writer. Emig was one of the initial theorists who began to theorize writing as a formal process suggesting that writing be categorized into three stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting (Larsen, 1983). Prewriting involves the writer strategizing a plan for writing ideas. Prewriting is the stage of discovery in the

writing process when a person assimilates his subject to himself (Rohman, 1965). The writing or drafting stage of the composing process involves the writer drafting his/her initial thoughts and details about a topic. Drafting means generating work in first and subsequent instances which will involve the writer's awareness that at some point what is produced will need to be revised and edited (Harper & Kroll, 2020). During the rewriting stage of the writing process, the writer produces a finished piece. In rewriting, the writer rereads and rewrites a draft of the whole clarifying and extending the fitness of its parts in a whole structure (Larsen, 1983). Each stage of the process helps the writer produce a finished piece that reflects his/her thoughts and ideas on a topic and can promote self-efficacy with writing. In the context of writing, self-efficacy has been shown to be consistent with writing achievement (Demirel & Aydin, 2019).

Teachers' Experiences with the Writing Process

Teachers' experiences with writing can be both personal and professional, with each having the potential to affect the other. Cremlin and Oliver (2017) stated that teachers who identify as writers are able to provide richer classroom writing experiences. The way in which student teachers are prepared to teach writing can also have an impact on their experiences with writing once they become teachers. Saine and West (2017) contended that teacher education programs must do more to develop their prospective teachers' competence in writing instruction and assume the role of writing coaches. Bastug (2016) advocated investigating teachers' feelings and experiences in the learning and teaching process to better understand how to improve teacher efficacy and quality of teaching.

A teacher's own writing success as a student could correlate to the teacher's attitude and skill when teaching the writing process to his/her students (S. Kent & Wanzek, 2016). The perspective of the teacher towards writing could evolve from his/her personal and professional experiences with the writing process. McCarthy and Woodard (2018) discovered when teachers' beliefs about writing instruction do not align with the intent of the underlying material, teachers tend to reject the curriculum. S. Kent and Wanzek (2016) established that positive personal writing experiences such as an interest in writing at an early age or an impact made from a particular event or class, resulted in higher teacher self-efficacy, whereas negative personal writing experiences can lead to negative teacher self-efficacy.

The formative years of present-day teachers may have had an impact on their personal experiences with writing. McCarthy and Woodard (2018) maintained that teachers' personal experiences with the writing process can positively or negatively impact the way in which they proceed with the teaching of writing. Many teachers do not view themselves as effective in teaching students how to write. Sturk and Lindgren (2019) stated that teachers are sifting through their beliefs about writing as well as their personal histories and experiences with learning to write, and these beliefs influence their instruction. Although some teachers' personal experiences with writing may have been negative, the responsibility to teach students the writing process remains. The lack of personal experience with authentic writing could be the cause for many teachers searching for effective strategies to reignite writing in literacy blocks (Blanch et al., 2017). As personal experiences with writing play a role in teachers' perceptions,

professional experiences with writing contribute to the way teachers approach the task of writing.

Each day teachers across the United States are required to teach state curriculums and standards which are composed of expectations for writing among students. As teachers are challenged with these writing requirements, many of them are unsure and lack the skills necessary to teach writing. The unpreparedness many teachers feel to teach writing has not eased the demands of the writing curriculums as the urgency for students to engage in the writing process has gained momentum. The emphasis the United States' CCSS has placed on writing by requiring students to write in all subject areas, compels more focus on writing to learn (Blanch et al., 2017). Writing philosophies and experiences can influence how teachers respond to new changes within their school's writing curriculum (McCarthy & Woodard, 2018). Professional development could impact teachers' experiences with the writing process depending upon how effective the workshop is and how effective the teacher is in implementing writing methods learned within the professional development session. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated that a growing number of rigorous studies have established that well designed professional development can, when effectively implemented, lead to desirable changes in teacher practice and student outcomes. Searching for articles on teachers' experiences with the writing process returned results, but my pursuit for articles on teachers' actual classroom experiences with teaching the writing process was unsuccessful.

Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education programs are designed to prepare student teachers for academic life within the classroom. Teacher education programs consist of a diverse group of courses in various academic areas, yet the programs lack sufficient writing training. When surveyed, teachers have reported they are not adequately prepared to teach writing as a result of little time spent on the teaching of writing in their teacher education programs and that they were not generally able to translate their learning in teacher preparation into classroom practice (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019). Sanders et al. (2020) reported that historically, writing instruction in teacher education programs has been neglected in curriculum design, policy contexts, and literacy research. Although teacher education programs are designed to prepare student teachers to effectively teach students, there are students who emerge from these programs feeling a lack of preparation to teach students to engage in the writing process. Hall and White (2019) stated that many teacher education programs often neglect training their student teachers how to teach writing. Many teachers express that their teacher education programs did not provide them with adequate training on how to effectively teach the writing process. Brenner and McQuirk (2019) found that many teachers feel as though their teacher education programs inadequately prepared them to teach writing, as most of their time was spent on reading skills, rather than writing.

Once student teachers become certified educators, they are responsible for teaching their students how to engage in the writing process. Lack of preparation in this area could present a challenge for both the teacher and the student. Saine and West

(2017) found that limited instruction in teaching writing resulted in new content area teachers entering their classrooms underprepared to teach writing. Although writing requirements are evident in various state standards and curriculums throughout the United States, few teacher preparation programs offer writing courses. Sanders et al. (2020) uncovered that writing pedagogy is too often missing from kindergarten through 12th grade teacher preparation programs with only one in four programs having a writing course. Due to the lack of preparedness to teach writing among many teachers, professional development workshops could provide remediation in the area of writing.

Professional Development

Providing comprehensive professional development with ongoing coaching and support, teacher knowledge and skills with writing skills will improve (Bresina & McMaster, 2020). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined professional development focused on helping teachers teach writing, as structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes. Teachers' competency in teaching specific writing skills can be increased through professional development in areas such as explicit prewriting activities, specific feedback, and effective collaboration between teachers and students (Curtis, 2017). However, although there are benefits to professional development, there is evidence that following participation in professional development workshops, teachers may continue to struggle with teaching the writing process. If teachers continue to lack comfort and understanding in teaching writing (Darling-Hammond et al.). Therefore, the role of professional development in the teaching of the writing process could be a potential

challenge for teachers. Teachers may need additional support after attending professional development sessions. Important features that have proven to be effective for teachers' professional development are consistency with existing knowledge and beliefs, focus on content and how students learn that content, alignment with state standard, opportunities for teachers to be involved in active learning, and collaboration between teachers (Koster et al., 2017).

Professional development for teachers is provided within many schools across the United States. The objective for professional development is for teachers to obtain information, training, and modeling on teaching a concept or task to students. Bresina and McMaster (2020) stated that to support teachers in developing and sustaining the necessary knowledge and skills required to successfully implement professional development and ongoing coaching shows promise of effectiveness. The objective is for teachers to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the writing process.

Professional development can foster teachers' writing proficiency and in turn improve students' writing achievements (Curtis, 2017). Professional development with writing could nurture the fears, anxiety, uncertainty, and/or intimidation teachers may feel when teaching the writing process. School administrators, policymakers, and teachers look to professional development as a necessity for improving writing instruction and student writing (Lillge, 2019). Professional development with writing also allows teachers the ability to collaborate and plan together more in an effort to intensify their knowledge on teaching the writing process. Hall and White (2019) found that it is imperative for

teachers to collaborate with their teammates and make a commitment to include more opportunities for students to write and keep each other accountable.

The effectiveness of professional development, as it relates to preparing teachers to teach writing, could rely on teacher motivation, sufficient time to teach writing, and the quality of the writing workshop. The process of embracing teacher-motivation as one engages in professional development with writing could be a contributing factor to teacher-success with teaching writing to students. McKeown et al. (2019) asserted that quality teaching is critical to student learning, and professional development for teachers is viewed as one of the most promising interventions for addressing teacher quality. Sufficient preparation during professional writing workshops could help teachers feel more supported and anchored in the professional development process. Koster et al. (2017) affirmed that training teachers in applying effective writing practices increases their self-efficacy for teaching writing which is positively related to their quality of instruction.

Teachers may emerge from writing training with a sense of commitment and preparedness to teach the task yet lack time to fully implement teaching students to write. A sufficient amount of time for students to spend immersed in the writing process could play a pivotal role in students' writing success. Hall (2019) believed that an appropriate segment of time for writing is among the factors for effective writing. Essential for the student and teacher is enough time to write. Miller et al. (2016) found that young writers must be allowed time to write, and that time should be allotted for feedback on what they have written. Support from a knowledgeable and caring teacher is critical for students as

they work through the writing process (Miller et al., 2016). Providing opportunities for teachers to have time to feel adept at implementing writing instruction into the classroom following professional development is important. Without time made available and institutional encouragement to improve their abilities and effectiveness, teachers reported feeling they could not teach writing at quality levels (A. Kent & Brannan, 2016).

The quality of professional development could play a pivotal role in the attitudes of teachers and students towards the application of the writing process. McKeown et al. (2019) stated that professional development is viewed as one of the most promising interventions to improving teacher quality and is critical to student learning. Professional development workshops on writing should be motivational and adaptable for teachers to gain new information on how to teach writing to students and transfer the information to students in a way that is manageable and efficient. Quoura et al. (2018) found that the professional development of teacher quality is essential in fostering improved learning for all students since it helps teachers learn and implement effective approaches. Professional development can build a teacher's confidence about teaching writing. For schools and districts, it is essential for teachers' confidence that purposeful, practical, and ongoing professional development opportunities in writing are provided (Lehman, 2017). Teachers also need ongoing writing resources to nurture their professional development experience. Many teachers feel supported to teach writing when they are provided with resources to support writing instruction (Philippakos & Voggt, 2021).

Resources

Teachers need adequate resources to teach writing. Instructional resources are very important in helping teachers reach instructional goals (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2019). Support from local and state school administrators for teachers during their teaching of the writing process, as well as word processing training for students are resources teachers need to teach students how to write. Graham (2019) stated that stakeholders, such as school administrators, instructional coaches and parents, need to know that writing is important; promotes successful learning; the time spent writing and teaching writing is insufficient in most classrooms; and many students in their district or state are not developing the writing skills needed to be successful in school, college, or work. Students need sufficient typing skills to write successfully, as many standardized writing assessments are administered electronically, requiring students to type their responses. Teachers should be equipped to teach students how to type fluently on electronic writing tests. Robinson et al. (2019) found that one third of teachers either teach themselves or use their existing knowledge to support digital pedagogy. The field should offer more targeted training for writing and communicating with teachers about the use of digital resources (Robinson et al., 2019). Teachers are able to influence pedagogy, practice, and research; thus, it is important to be well-informed about how digital technology has been used in the writing program, knowledgeable about whether and how its use has supported the development of students' writing skills, and aware of the barriers teachers face in implementing technology-mediated writing instruction (C. Williams & Beam, 2019).

Student Readiness

Students write at different levels, thus creating a possible challenge for teachers. Students' readiness for writing occurs at different stages. To master writing skills, students must first become proficient at listening, speaking, reading, and structure skills according to their level (Kencana & Melati, 2020). Teachers should be ready to accommodate students wherever they are in their readiness for writing, which could be implemented in the form of differentiating writing instruction for students in small groups or one on one according to their writing levels. Dack (2019) expressed that differentiating instruction calls on teachers to adjust content, instructional methods, student products, and aspects of the learning environment to align with learner differences. The process of accommodating student readiness for writing through differentiation could reveal the need for professional development and time to collaboratively plan with peer teachers. Postholm (2018) stated that giving teachers time to collaborate was one way that principals could support teachers' professional development.

Summary

Throughout the literature review, I found general support regarding the origins of the cognitive process teacher model and studies on teachers' thoughts and behaviors, as well as the efficacy of Culham's 6+1 writing traits. I also uncovered supportive information on writing development, the evolution of the writing process, and the current status of writing in the classroom. However, there was a lack of information that discussed elementary teachers' experiences and perceptions about the writing process, and minimal discussion of what teachers feel they need to teach the writing process.

Among the major findings was information which discussed writing development. As pre-Kindergarten students are presented with writing opportunities to strengthen their writing development, elementary teachers have the responsibility of helping students enhance their development with writing (CCSS Initiative, 2020). At a time when elementary teachers assume great responsibility for teaching writing within our schools to prepare students for writing expectations in higher grade-levels, they face many challenges. The teacher's role in increasing students' writing development could rely on his/her own perceptions and experiences. Hall et al. (2021) expressed that teachers' attitudes towards teaching writing are a critical element in determining the quality of writing instruction they plan for and will provide to their students. Many teachers feel underprepared to nurture students' writing development. Resources, such as stakeholder support and word processor training to prepare students and teachers for electronic standardized writing assessments are preparatory tools for teachers to teach writing (Graham, 2019; Robinson et al., 2019). Another important finding involved foundational information on the writing process. The writing process emerged from the theoretical analysis that students needed freedom in their writing which was not obtained through copying and reproducing text (Moffett, 1982). Finally, my findings involved information on professional development for teachers, standardized writing assessments, and challenges teachers face when teaching writing such as time, state curriculums, and lack of sufficient writing training within teacher education programs. Most students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 are underperforming on standardized writing assessments (NAEP, 2017). Many teachers have expressed their teacher education programs did not prepare them to

teach students how to write (Brenner & McQuirk, 2019). Professional development, as it relates to increasing teachers' knowledge with teaching students to write, can be pivotal in helping students' increase their writing fluency (Howell et al., 2018). Each state has writing expectations written into each grade level that teachers are expected to help students master by the end of the school year (McCarthy & Woodard, 2018). Many teachers feel as though they lack sufficient time to teach writing due to the need to satisfy other curricular requirements. These findings are important for developing questions that can further explore third- and fourth- grade teacher perceptions about the writing process and what they need to be successful instructors of the writing process.

Clark and Peterson's (1984) cognitive thought process model served as the conceptual framework for this study. Teachers' thought processes and the impact their thought processes have on behavior is described in this model helped to understand teachers' perceptions and experiences with teaching the writing process. Elementary teachers' skills and knowledge with the writing process are important for students' desired performance on standardized writing assessments and writing fluency. However, teachers have the responsibility of addressing students' readiness for writing individually or collectively through differentiation. Van Geel et al. (2019) stated that ideally, teachers should not use a one-size- fits all basis but differentiate instruction activities deliberately so that students receive instruction that matches their needs. There is an agreement among scholars on the importance of students engaging in the writing process. However, scholars recognize challenges with the writing process, such as teachers' lack of preparation and time to teach writing (Graham, 2019).

In Chapter 3, I describe the study design. My role as researcher is discussed. The process for selecting participants, data collection tools and data collection process is provided within this chapter. Issues of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures are explained. Included in Chapter 3 is the research design, participant selection logic, recruitment procedures, and descriptions of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this basic qualitative study, I endeavored to explore elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching writing, their experiences in teaching the writing process to students, what strategies they feel are best practices, and what they need to be good teachers of the writing process. While there are a variety of studies that consider the writing process and the importance of students' writing, there is a gap in the literature about the perception and experiences elementary teachers have with the writing process. I found few studies on elementary teachers' experiences and perceptions about the writing process. The results from this study may help inform school administrators of teachers' experiences and feelings with the writing process which can be a foundation to build an ongoing support plan as an optional source of support for teachers who would like guidance with teaching writing.

Chapter 3 includes the research design, rationale, research questions, participant selection logic, recruitment procedures, instrumentation, and the plan for data collection and analysis. Ethical procedures are also addressed in this chapter, as are trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. A chapter summary concludes the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

In Chapter 2, I discussed literature that addressed the challenges teachers face when teaching students to write proficiently. Findings suggested teachers may lack the skills necessary to teach students to write fluently on grade level (Poch et al., 2020). Elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching the writing process and their

experiences with writing could be contributors to the majority of grade level students' lack of writing fluency. Many teachers do not feel prepared to teach writing (Graham, 2019). Hodges et al. (2019) stated that teachers often report a lack of preparation from their teacher education programs, piecemeal curriculum, underdeveloped personal writing skill, and lack of time in the school day as reasons writing is not taught extensively. Although many teachers feel ill prepared to teach writing, there is a need for elementary students to master writing skills (DeSmedt et al., 2020). Understanding the perceptions and experiences of elementary teachers about teaching the writing process is the basis of this generic qualitative study. The research questions were:

RQ1: What are third- and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of teaching the writing process?

RQ2: What are the experiences of third- and fourth-grade teachers with teaching the writing process?

RQ3: What do third- and fourth-grade teachers perceive they need in order to be good teachers of the writing process?

Research Methodology

The basic qualitative design was appropriate for this study, as it enabled me to use interviews as the mechanism to explore elementary teacher perceptions in-depth.

Through the basic qualitative design, researchers are allowed to focus on their personal intellectual interest and purport knowledge as an end unto itself, and a quest to discover truth (Patton, 2015). The method is often chosen when the purpose is to provide a description of a specific phenomenon or experience (Nicolas, 2015). The basic qualitative

approach allows for understanding the lived experiences of individuals (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This approach addresses how the participant makes meaning of a situation or phenomenon (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). With this approach, the exploration of elementary teachers' perceptions about the writing process and their experiences in teaching the writing process were possible.

Kahlke (2014) maintained that a basic qualitative research design stands apart from other qualitative methodologies. The basic qualitative approach presented the opportunity for me to discover meaning and understanding surrounding the unexplored phenomenon of elementary teacher perceptions about and experiences with the writing process, without the limitations and restrictions of other methodologies. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) expressed the view that generic research is an approach to comprehend and illuminate the meaning of people's experiences. The research questions guided the development of the interview questions. Interviewing the participants empowered a more profound discovery of participants' mindsets, viewpoints, and thoughts about teaching the writing process.

Rationale for the Chosen Methodology

Ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and a phenomenological design are other qualitative approaches that I considered. The core focus of the auto/ethnographic design is culture and how it relates to the researcher and/or a group of people (Patton, 2015). The culture of a person or a group of people was not the premise for my study. I understood grounded theory to be appropriate for studies of diverse phenomena and large data sets, whereas exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences is focused on a single

topic. I did not feel that a case study approach would allow me to fully investigate the research questions for this study. A single interview would limit the ability to explore multiple perceptions, restricting the ability to understand a variety of experiences, views, opinions, feelings, rewards, and challenges. Patton (2015) stated that phenomenology is interested in recovering the living moment of the now. Various attributes of writing were discussed throughout this paper, including history and development; therefore, I determined that my study did not align with the phenomenological design. The premise of this study is the writing process, which is not a phenomenon, as the writing process is evolutionary.

My research focused solely on qualitative components, such as the perceptions and feelings of third- and fourth-grade teachers. Therefore, no form of a quantitative design was used for this study, as numerical data were not collected for this project. The basic qualitative approach allowed the exploration of teachers' perceptions and experiences related to the writing process. Qualitative inquiry documents what happens among real people in the real world in their own words, from their own perceptions, and within their own contexts (Patton, 2015). Data analysis of teachers' interview responses can provide honest and rich insights into what teachers feel about their role in teaching the writing process. The discoveries allowed me to comprehend and illuminate the meaning teachers make of the experience of teaching writing to their students.

Role of the Researcher

Within this basic qualitative study, I collected, analyzed, and interpreted data from elementary teachers. My relationships with the participants are as a colleague from

working relationships within various school settings, such as meetings and training sessions. I have no supervisory relationship or any other power differential with the intended participants. To avoid the ethical issue of conducting the study within my own work environment, teachers were recruited from various public schools across a southeastern state, excluding my workplace. Once data were collected, I protected the data gathered from each participant, as well as their confidentiality by labeling each sample with a pseudonym, such as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and so forth. Participants were reminded that they could discontinue their interviews at any time.

In-depth interviews were conducted via Zoom and audio taped. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), there are six assets of in-depth interviewing. Detailed experiences, opinions, motives, and the ways the participants see the world offered insight into perspectives that may have differed from those of the researcher. The second asset was the ability of interviewing to help reconstruct events the researcher may not have experienced. Thirdly, in-depth interviewing could reveal inherent social processes. The fourth benefit of interviews was the ability to elicit from the participants how their experiences and perceptions may have changed through time. The exploration of counterintuitive, complex, or contradictory perspectives was a fifth strength of in-depth interviewing. Finally, in-depth interviewing was the best tool for exploring issues that may have been highly personal for participants.

Polit and Beck (2014) stated that bias is commonly understood to be any influence that provides a distortion in the results of a study. The issue of bias was managed within my research by remaining non-judgmental towards participants'

responses and keeping my personal feelings about writing withheld from interviewees and other participants involved with my research project. I teach writing and have very strong feelings about the process and how it should be taught. I understood that throughout the interviewing process my personal feelings about writing were not to be disclosed. I was vigilant not to allow my own perceptions to influence the data collection, analysis, or interpretation. Incentives were not provided to participants for participating in this study.

Methodology

The type of qualitative inquiry influenced the study procedures and design. Guest et al. (2013) advised careful deliberation when selecting the method. In the following sections, I provide further details and explanation about the participant selection logic, instrumentation, recruitment procedures, and data collection. I also explain the plans for data analysis. Issues of trustworthiness are then discussed within the contexts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Participant Selection

In reviewing the literature, I examined recommendations from Yale University for participant selection. Yale University (2020) advised compiling a detailed description of attributes required for the research prior to participant selection. Another recommendation is a statement of participant inclusion criteria. *Inclusion criteria* is defined as the essential characteristics of the participants needed to achieve the purpose of the research; in contrast, *exclusion criteria* are any disqualifying characteristics of participants that do not contribute to the purpose (Yale University, 2020).

Following Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, my study took place with six random participants who taught at schools in a southeastern state in the United States. Each participant was a third or fourth grade teacher and taught the writing process. Initially, I expected to recruit at least 10 third- and fourth-grade teachers who were responsible for teaching the writing process. The recommendation of Korstjens and Moser (2018) that participants have experience with the phenomenon to be studied, informed my selection criteria. Criteria for participation in this study were the following:

1. Participants are third- and fourth-grade elementary teachers that currently teach the writing process to students within their school in southeastern state in the United States.
2. Participants need to have 3 years of experience teaching the writing process to third- and fourth-grade students.

Qualitative researchers must predetermine the sample size for their study to satisfy human subjects' review or ethics committees, grant proposals, and/or funding agencies (Young & Casey, 2019). Purposeful sampling was used to select participants for this study. Purposeful sampling involves recruiting participants for a study because of their exposure to or experience of the phenomenon in question (F. Ryan et al., 2007). Creswell (2009) believed purposeful sampling best helps the researcher understand the problem and the research question. To achieve data saturation, six elementary teachers who teach within a southeastern state were asked to participate in this study. It is typical in qualitative research for sample sizes to be small (Creswell, 2009). Participants were

asked to participate in semistructured interviews to share their perceptions of the teaching the writing process and their experiences with teaching the writing process as well.

Instrumentation

The data collection process involved semistructured interviews which were conducted through Zoom. The interviews were one-on-one and consisted of general, open-ended questions which allowed the participant to share unconstrained perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). One interview question for participants focused on teachers' self-awareness of themselves as facilitators of the writing process. This information was analyzed to gain insight into what happens during the instruction of writing and what teachers feel about teaching the writing process. Interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission.

Successful interviews start with careful planning that considers the focus and scope of the research question (McGrath et al., 2018). I developed an interview guide (see Appendix) to assist in conducting my interviews. Due to the risks presented by COVID-19, engaging in face-to-face interviews was unlikely, resulting in interviews being conducted through Zoom. Open-ended interview questions were aligned to each research question. A warm-up question was asked to begin the interview. The more challenging questions were asked during the middle of the interview. The interview guide also included a closing paragraph. To prepare for the actual interview process, I scheduled two practice interviews with two teachers who taught the writing process. These pilot-test teachers were not included in the study, but provided feedback to help refine the interview procedure. The pilot-test participants were also informed that their

willingness to be interviewed, along with their contributions, would provide me with practice for the actual interview process.

For the actual study, I contacted each prospective participant by email. A recruitment paragraph that provided information on grade level students' writing performance on standardized assessments began each email. Each potential participant received an invitation requesting his/her participation in my project. A Walden University developed Informed Consent Form was issued to participants. Both forms were sent by email to the interviewee. Participants were asked to send a reply to me in which they typed "I consent." I envisioned that each participant would be truthful and forthcoming with information on their perceptions of the teaching the writing process and their experiences with teaching the writing process.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

After Walden's IRB approved my study, six teachers who taught third and fourth grade within a southeastern state served as participants for this study. I sought participants with the assistance of an assistant superintendent and by sending emails to random third and fourth grade teachers who taught the writing process. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling using the following criteria: (a) third- and fourth-grade elementary teachers who currently taught the writing process to students within their school in a school district within a southeastern state in the United States; and (b) participants needed to have three years of experience teaching the writing process to third- and fourth-grade students. Each participant received an email from me which was

composed of a recruitment paragraph that briefly described the study and an attached invitation to be a part of my study. I introduced myself within the invitation and briefly discussed the purpose of my research. I recruited participants by asking if they would like to participate in a research study that would provide information on teachers' perceptions and experiences with teaching the writing process. I also shared with participants the fact that over half of students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 within the United States lack writing proficiency (NCES, 2019). Chosen interviewees received an Informed Consent Form. If participants decided to participate in the study, they were, as instructed in the Informed Consent form, to reply with, "I consent," to my email. Participants were also provided with a time span of 2 weeks to respond if interested in participating.

Data Collection

Virtual, semistructured interviews were conducted with six elementary teachers responsible for teaching the writing process. Their interviews were the primary data source for this study. Zoom was the software used to conduct virtual interviews. Interviewing was the chosen method of data collection for my basic qualitative study. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perceptions of others is meaningful and knowable and can be explicit (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews were chosen as the data collection tool because interviewing allows one to enter into another person's perspective (Patton, 2015). The focus of the interviews was to understand elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching the writing process and their experiences with teaching the writing process.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, virtual interviews were held. Each interview was conducted using Zoom software. Hand-written notes were also taken during each interview. Recording each interview helped preserve data. I emailed teachers to schedule a date and time for each interview. Each interview was labeled and secured to ensure confidentiality and ethical security. Although this study has been completed, participants' interviews will remain confidential and will be stored securely for two years.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis entailed transcribing the interviews, disaggregating sets of similar and dissimilar data, deductive coding of the transcripts, and identifying themes and patterns. Otter.ai software was used to record interviews and aided in the data transcriptions. Data was analyzed using the NVivo data analysis software, as well as manual coding. An unbiased position was maintained in reviewing teacher participants' responses and transcriptions. Member checks were conducted; whereby, preliminary findings were provided to participants for review to encourage feedback on the accuracy and authentic representation of responses, feelings, perceptions, and perspectives. Themes suggested by the literature review provided direction for the deductive coding process. After each interview was coded, the codes were combined and grouped for alignment with my research questions and conceptual framework.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness or truth value of qualitative research and transparency of the conduct of the study are crucial to the usefulness and integrity of the findings (Connelly, 2016). Elo et al. (2014) found that content analysis results depend on the availability of rich, appropriate, and well-saturated data. To ensure trustworthiness within this study, various methods were employed to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

As the researcher, I controlled my biases throughout the research process to ensure credibility. Credibility depends largely on the researcher's integrity (Patton, 2015). Internal validity was established within my study by using methods such as descriptive, interpretative, and theoretical validity. By employing descriptive validity within my study, an interview guide was developed which was used with each participant. The interviews were recorded using Zoom software. The recording from each interview was uploaded through Otter.ai transcription software. I reviewed the recordings to verify that each participant's interview was recorded accurately to help establish descriptive validity and factual accuracy.

Data interpretation was used to help ensure the authenticity of the participants' experiences and perceptions. To make sense or find meaning in the data, each participant was asked to review his/her interview to ensure their responses are accurate and consistent with each question (Petry et al., 2006). This was accomplished by emailing each participant a transcript of his/her interview. During the data analysis stage, language not used by the participant was not introduced into the study. This helped maintain the

authenticity of the participant's narrative and helped with data analysis and interpretation. to help with checking for accuracy and consistency.

Finally, to ensure credibility the study aspired to attain interpretive validity was used. Exploring the participants' responses and my interpretations within the framework of the cognitive process teacher model helped maintain accurate reporting. Culham's 6+1 writing traits model served as the secondary model, keeping a focus on teaching the writing process, using the tenets of a writing model. Both models were used to inform the data collection and analysis for this study.

Transferability

Transferability relates to the ability of the findings to be transferred to other contexts or settings (Maher et al., 2018). Maintaining accuracy with elementary teachers' perceptions of teaching the writing process and their experiences with the process strengthened transferability. Readers of this study may be able to transfer findings of this study to a study that is similar. Transferability aids in providing readers with sufficient information on the case studies such that readers could establish the degree of similarity between the case studied and the case in which findings might be transferred (Patton, 2015). Verbatim transcripts and thick descriptions in data analysis will ensure transferability (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). Otter.ai software was used to assist with the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Dependability

Dependability involves participants' evaluation of findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from

participants of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure dependability, the researcher is expected to give the reader sufficient information needed to determine how dependable the study and researcher are (F. Ryan et al., 2007). To promote the dependability of my research and a thorough understanding of its effectiveness, this study consisted of several factors to produce a dependable study. Those factors included the research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data gathering, and the reflective appraisal of the project (Shenton, 2004). The review of my Committee Chair and Methodologist also aided in promoting dependability with my research.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the steps taken by the researcher that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions (Shenton, 2004). My research relied on the data collected, rather than my own personal perceptions and experiences with the writing process. Confirmability explains the extent to which findings are qualitatively comfortable through the analysis being grounded in the data and through examination of the audit trail (Hannes, 2011). To strengthen confirmability, an audit trail was established. The audit trail consisted of documented methods and data to deepen knowledge on elementary teachers' perceptions and experiences with the writing process.

Ethical Procedures

Research in social science has paid consideration to ethical features in qualitative research (Ngozwana, 2018). Once my proposal received IRB approval, I recruited participants. Participants were selected ethically and through purposeful sampling. Each participant was emailed a recruitment paragraph and an attached invitation to be a

participant in my study. Participants were notified that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from being interviewed at any time without penalty. Each participant received an Informed Consent Form. Prior to each interview, consent from each participant as recommended by Walden's IRB was received.

All data is unidentifiable to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Each participant's interview was coded with a pseudonym. Names of schools and participants have been withheld throughout the entire study. Access to my computer files, video/audio recordings and transcriptions are protected with a password known and used only by me as the researcher. any part of this project. The information obtained from this study has been stored for five years and then destroyed. Third, the participants' identities remained anonymous, as each participant was identified within the study with a pseudonym. For instance, pseudonyms for participants were labeled Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and so forth. These pseudonyms were used to identify the participants throughout the study's data collection and data analysis process.

Summary

This basic qualitative study aimed to deepen to explore elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching writing, their experiences in teaching the writing process to students, what strategies they feel are best practices, and what they needed to be good teachers of the writing process. Potential participants were recruited through purposeful sampling once my Proposal was IRB approved. Semistructured interviews were the data collection tool for this project. Six participants were selected based on their experiences as elementary teachers of writing. Each participant received an invitation to participate in

the study. A verbatim, Walden developed Informed Consent form was emailed to participants. Interviewees were assured that their identities and data samples would remain confidential throughout the study and destroyed once the project received its final approval. Each participant engaged in a 20 minute interview. Data were analyzed with data analysis software. Otter.ai software was used to record interviews and aided in the data sample transcriptions. NVivo software was used to aid in coding each interview. To ensure trustworthiness, personal thoughts, feelings, and/or opinions of the researcher were not included in this study. Only the data and other research collected was used to contribute information for this study.

Chapter 4: Results

In this basic qualitative study, I explored the experiences and perceptions of third and fourth grade teachers about the writing process. The cognitive process teacher model served as the primary conceptual framework (Clark & Peterson, 1984) and the 6+1 Writing Traits Model served as the secondary framework for this study. My study is focused on three research questions which were developed based on the cognitive process teacher model (Clark & Peterson, 1984). The research questions were:

RQ1: What are third and fourth grade teachers' perceptions of teaching the writing process?

RQ2: What are the experiences of third and fourth grade teachers with teaching the writing process?

RQ3: What do third and fourth grade teachers perceive they need to be good teachers of the writing process?

The setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, codes, and issues of trustworthiness are discussed in Chapter 4. The primary content of the chapter is the results and summary of my findings. An introduction to Chapter 5 concludes this Chapter.

Setting

The COVID-19 pandemic was still prevalent at the time of participant recruitment and data collection. Therefore, participants were contacted through email for participation. Each participant received an electronic copy of the recruitment invitation and consent form. Invitations were sent to third and fourth grade English Language Arts

teachers who taught within a southeastern state. I emailed recruitment invitations to teachers from March 2023 through July 2023. The teachers who agreed to participate in my study received an Informed Consent Form. The invitation and Informed Consent Form included the following qualifications for participants:

- taught the writing process for at least 3 years to third and fourth grade students
- currently teach within a southeastern state

My initial goal was to interview at least 10 participants through Zoom; however, I was unable to meet this goal. Several teachers agreed to participate but did not respond with their consent to participate after receiving the Informed Consent Form. The time of year may have been a contributing factor to the delay in recruiting participants. During the spring, many third and fourth grade students take standardized assessments. Therefore, the teachers were occupied during this time administering standardized/benchmark assessments to students. Ultimately, I was able to recruit six teachers, two teachers during the spring and four teachers during the summer. Each teacher who was recruited taught in a different county in the southeastern state where the study took place.

The six teachers consented to be interviewed through Zoom by replying “I consent” after reviewing the Informed Consent Form. I informed the participants that I would conduct their interviews at a time that was convenient for them. The approved Interview Guide (see Appendix) was used to conduct the semistructured interviews. I thanked participants at the beginning and conclusion of their interviews. Participants were given the option to cancel or discontinue their interviews at any time after giving consent if they no longer wanted to participate. Each interview averaged approximately

20 minutes and deepened my understanding of the perceptions and experiences of 3rd and 4th grade teachers about the writing process. The number of years teaching and the teachers' assessment themselves while teaching the writing process were included in the foundational questions for the interviews.

The interviews were imported from the Zoom folder to my hard drive into the Otter.ai software for transcription. The interviews were transcribed from audio to text. Participants were labeled with a pseudonym consisting of the word "Participant" followed by a number (i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc.). The documents were stored securely on my password-protected laptop. My laptop was only used within my home and was stored in a safe location.

Demographics

Six 3rd and 4th grade teachers from public schools in a southeastern state were interviewed. Participants taught in various counties within the state. Each teacher had taught the writing process for at least 3 years (see Table 2). Initially, I planned to collect data from three schools; however, due to lack of participation, I expanded my search for participants to include other elementary schools throughout the state. I visited numerous public schools' webpages within the state that publicized teachers' email addresses. Since the teachers' emails and class webpages were public, I did not need to submit a Permission Request Letter to participants' administrators, as I was not going to physically enter their physical school locations to conduct the interviews. Only third and fourth grade teachers were emailed invitations. Each participant taught at a public elementary school. Their years of experience ranged from 4 to 30 years.

Table 2*Demographics of Data Sample*

Participant	Years of experience	Grade taught
1	30	4 th
2	18	3 rd
3	24	3 rd
4	29	3 rd
5	4	4 th
6	24	4 th

Note. Each participant teaches the writing process.

Data Collection

After Walden University's IRB granted approval for me to collect data for my study (approval no. 2-10-23-0253928), I began recruiting participants. Originally, I tried recruiting participants from three schools within the same region of a southeastern state; however, due to lack of participation, I widened my search and decided to recruit participants from other regions throughout the state. Each participant's email was publicized on their school's website. I was surprised at the lack of participation since I sent hundreds of invitations to third and fourth grade teachers within different school districts throughout the state. I realized that students and teachers were preparing to take spring benchmark and state-mandated standardized assessments. I believed the timing of my recruitment efforts may have been a reason for the lack of interest from teachers to participate in the study.

Data were collected from March 2023 through July 2023. My first semistructured interview took place March 29, 2023. Due to the prevalence of COVID-19, no face-to-face interviews were scheduled. Interviews were conducted using Zoom software. At the

beginning of each interview, participants were thanked for participating and reminded that their interviews would be kept confidential. Each participant was also informed that they would receive a copy of the summary of the results. Participants discussed their experiences and perceptions about the writing process. Throughout the interview, I asked clarifying questions to probe for a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions and experiences. I often repeated back to a participant their comment to ensure that I captured and understood their meanings.

The average time span for the interviews was 20 minutes. The first three interviews took place after school hours within my classroom during the spring. The remaining Zoom interviews took place in my home during the summer. Data were collected on my personal password-protected laptop. The issue of bias was managed by withholding my personal feelings and remaining non-judgmental throughout the interviews.

I saved each interview within the Zoom folder on my hard drive. I changed the name of each interview to a pseudonym to protect the identity of the participants; Zoom automatically assigns recordings with an identification number. Each interview was labeled chronologically: Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and so forth. Once all interviews were completed, I purchased the Otter.ai transcription software. All interviews were imported from the Zoom folder on my hard drive and transcribed by Otter.ai. I printed the transcribed interviews and began manually coding. The NVivo qualitative data analysis software was later purchased to further assist with the coding process.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2009) stated that data analysis is the process of rationalizing collected data using a multi-level approach to find commonalities with themes and perspectives. After each interview was complete, I printed a copy of each transcribed interview. I began highlighting participants' responses to the interview questions. I color coded the responses to each question. For example, the first interview question was coded with a blue highlighter for each participant's response. The second interview question was coded with a yellow highlighter. I continued this process of alternating among the colors until responses to each question were coded. After manually coding the interviews, I uploaded the transcriptions into the NVivo software to assist with further data analysis. NVivo helped organize my data, which made the process of analysis more manageable. Each participant's responses were uploaded into the software under their assigned pseudonyms. Manually coding responses, in addition to uploading them to NVivo, helped me look for emergent themes. Both forms of coding helped ensure validity. Creswell (2009) found that validity within qualitative research demonstrates the accuracy of the researcher's findings.

Although participants answered each research question, many of the responses included information that was not directly related to the question. Therefore, I analyzed each response and focused only on the precise answer to each question. Once data were coded, I began looking for categories and themes. The codes, categories, and themes, as well as the meaning for each theme, are explained in Table 3.

Table 3*Example Codes, Categories, and Themes*

Example codes	Categories	Themes	Meaning of theme
Differentiation	Various ways to differentiate writing instruction	Ability group, small group, modeling, partnering	Teachers' strategies for differentiating instruction
Experiences	Experiences with teaching the writing process	Best, Worst, Future Impact	Teachers' descriptions of their experiences with teaching the writing process
Impact on student growth	Teacher impact on student growth in the area of writing	Ineffective, model, priority, progressive	Perceptions of impact on students' writing growth
Most valuable qualities	Most valuable writing qualities	Emotional support, modeling, organization	Teachers' views on their most valuable qualities when teaching writing
Pre and post writing assessments	Administering pre/post writing assessment	No, yes, supplement	Responses to administering pre/post assessments
Professional development	Professional development on teaching writing	Essential, experience, neutral	Teachers' views on professional development as it relates to teaching writing
Self-assessment	Self-assessment while teaching writing process	Confidence, remediatary, uncertainty	Teachers' self-assessment of themselves on teaching the writing process
Time management	Management of time when teaching writing	Personal management system, self imposed, unstructured	Descriptions of how time is managed when teaching writing
Final comments	Teachers' concluding reflections	Aesthetic responses, perseverance, writing needs	Teachers' final views on the writing process

Note. This table illustrates the codes, categories, and themes from the interview data.

Codes

Creswell (2009) stated that coding involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences or images into categories and labeling those categories with a term, often in the actual language of the participant. I began the coding process manually. I named each code according to the topic of each research question. For instance, the first question involved teachers' assessment of themselves while teaching writing. Therefore, I named the code "self-assessment." I began looking for patterns and themes among the responses. Creswell (2009) stated that patterns in qualitative data are theoretical lens or naturalistic generalizations to describe the broader explanations used or developed in qualitative studies. This process was repeated for each research question.

After manually coding responses, I uploaded the data into NVivo to further analyze the data, and to aid in making the coding process more manageable. Each code was labeled. Interview transcripts were assigned to align with each code. NVivo's organization of the codes and transcripts made the process of looking for themes and patterns easier.

Categories

My research questions helped me form categories. F. Ryan et al. (2007) found that categories are fundamental to the credibility of the findings in qualitative research. The main topic of each question aided in grouping the data to form categories. Each participant's responses were categorized to align with each code. For instance, under the

code, “Differentiation”, the category was labeled, “various ways to differentiate writing instruction.

Emergent Themes

J. P. Williams (2008) found that emergent themes are a basic building block of inductive approaches to qualitative social science research and are derived from the life worlds of research participants through the process of coding. I created an informal table and only entered participants’ direct responses to the questions asked. I looked for similarities among their responses. Although there were responses that did not share common traits, I did not omit the outlier data, but made connections of the data to certain themes. Paltridge (2019) found that if a decision is made to keep outlier data in, it is important to explain why it was retained and what its inclusion says about the results of the study. The responses helped deepen my understanding of teachers’ perspectives and experiences with the writing process. Twenty-nine themes and nine categories were identified after analyzing the codes. The themes are discussed in the Results section within this chapter.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I managed my biases throughout the data collection process by not revealing my personal thoughts and experiences about writing to participants. I remained non-judgmental towards participants’ responses throughout the interviews as well. Credibility was also maintained in this study by using an interview guide. Jamshed (2014) found that interview guides serve the useful purpose of exploring many respondents more

systematically and comprehensively as well as to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action. Interviews were recorded using Zoom software and transcribed through Otter.ai software. These tools were employed to help maintain credibility and descriptive validity.

Transferability

The accuracy of teachers' perceptions and experiences with the writing process was maintained throughout this study. Therefore, this study adheres to transferability. Readers will be able to transfer findings from this study to a study that is synonymous. F. Ryan et al. (2007) found that transferability is met when findings can fit into other contexts and readers can apply findings to their own experiences.

Dependability

To ensure dependability, an interview guide was developed. Each interview question within the interview guide was linked to one of the main research questions. The interview guide also helped to keep the study focused on the goal of the study which was to gather data on the perceptions and experiences about the writing process from third and fourth grade teachers. Interviews were conducted with several participants. Dependability was also strengthened during the coding process, as each interview was transcribed verbatim using Otter.ai software and uploaded into the NVivo system to aid in the data analysis process.

Confirmability

F. Ryan et al. (2007) found that confirmability requires the researcher to demonstrate how interpretations and conclusions have been reached. My biases and

beliefs were kept private. I focused solely on the participants' views and not my own. Korstjens and Moser (2018) found that confirmability concerns the aspect of neutrality. I used Zoom software to record the interviews. After all interviews were completed, I uploaded the interviews from Zoom into the Otter.ai software to be transcribed.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures in qualitative research help protect participants. Webster et al. (2013) found that good ethical qualitative research means developing an ethical conscience that puts participants interests at the heart of decision making. After gaining IRB approval, I began recruiting participants for my study. F. Ryan et al. (2007) found that ethical committee or IRB approval has to be sought before the research can be undertaken. Each participant received an invitation letter which gave a brief explanation of my study and an Informed Consent Form if they agreed to participate in the study. The Informed Consent Form informed the participants of the protection of their privacy throughout this study. Each participant's information was coded with a pseudonym. They were notified that their interviews would remain confidential and destroyed in five years. Data will continue to be stored on my password-protected laptop until it is destroyed.

Results

This study was guided by three research questions: (a) What are third and fourth grade teachers' perceptions of teaching the writing process?, (b) What are the experiences of third and fourth grade with teaching the writing process?, and (c) What do third and fourth grade teachers perceive they need to be good teachers of the writing process? After data analysis, nine codes were identified. The codes were grouped into categories. From

the categories emerged the themes. Manual coding and using NVivo's coding software aided in helping to organize the codes, categories, and themes.

Theme I: Self-Assessment (Confidence, Remediatary, and Uncertainty)

One of the initial interview questions was "What is your assessment of yourself while teaching the writing process?" Three participants revealed that they had confidence when teaching the writing process. However, the remaining three participants expressed that when teaching the writing process, they felt uncertain and needed to reteach and reassess their teaching strategy. Participants 3, 4, and 6 were confident teachers of the writing process. Participant 3 commented, "I feel more comfortable with teaching the writing process as opposed to someone who would be new." Participants 4 and 6 responded similarly: "I have the ability to teach writing in a way that helps kids learn and motivates them" and "I love teaching writing." Participant 1 felt they needed to remediate her approach to teaching the writing process. The Participant responded, "I look back and see what things I need to go back and reteach." Participants 2 revealed a lack of confidence when teaching writing: "I'm not one full of confidence when it comes to writing and teaching students writing." Participant 5 also expressed an unease with the process, stating, "I'm like, how do I teach this properly." The themes that emerged from this code illustrate how teachers' self-assessment of themselves as teachers of the writing process can impact their performance. Finlayson and McCrudden (2020) found that teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and opinions about writing can affect teachers' approaches to writing instruction.

Theme II: Impact (Progressive, Priority, Ineffective, and Model)

When asked how participants felt about their impact on student growth in the area of writing, three participants felt as though their students' growth was progressive. This question was developed to analyze teachers' perspectives on their impact on students' growth with teaching writing. Wang and Troia (2023) found that teachers who possess a positive self-perception of their efficacy as educators and are adequately prepared to teach writing are more likely to achieve student writing outcomes.

Participant 1 expressed the opinion that her students made progress. Participant 5's response their impact on student growth in writing was..." I'm very big on reaching my students' passions." Participant 6 felt as though the increase in writing from the beginning of the year to the end was "phenomenal". Participant 2 explained how they approached the students, "Let me comfort some more. ... Let me see what it is you are missing, then I model." Priority was the theme that emerged from Participant 3's answer: "We have made an intentional focus on our writing." Not all participants felt confident about making progress, evidenced by the confession from Participant 4: "I don't feel as if my student growth area is great."

Theme III: Experiences (Best, Worst, and Future Impact)

The themes that emerged from the "Experiences" code were best, worst, and future impact. Teaching writing can be a challenging task. Therefore, inquiring into teachers' account of their best and/or worst experiences with teaching writing helped deepen my understanding of teachers' experiences with teaching writing. Muliya et al. (2020) found that the teaching of writing is seen to be very challenging for a teacher

because writing does not merely focus on the product of writing, but also on the process of writing which requires the students to follow every single step in writing. Several participants described their best experiences. Participant 2 shared, “just to have the kids recognize where they are located and what they need to do to move forward has been a huge success on my end.” Participant 4 expressed their best experience was when they boosted a student’s morale about writing. Participant 6 offered that their best experience with teaching the writing process came in the form of “one of the writing projects we did.” Participant 6 also imparted the worst experience was “when I jumped in and thought the kids knew things they didn’t.” Participant 1 explained their worst experience as the challenge to “go into a lot of detail about how the process works and give them examples.” Participant 3 did not share a best/worst experience with teaching the writing process but revealed that they would have a greater impact on students with teaching the writing process currently and moving forward.

Theme IV: Time Management (Personal Management System, School Imposed, and Unstructured)

Time management is a task many teachers struggle to maintain when trying to teach different curricular standards. Olivo (2021) found that ineffective time management makes teachers feel pressed for time to make quick decisions without carefully considering every option. When participants were asked how they managed time when teaching the writing process, three themes emerged from the data; personal management system, school imposed, and unstructured. Participants 1 and 6 had their own personal time management system when teaching writing. Participant 1 disclosed that it was

necessary to “break writing up into small groups” to have enough time. Participant 6 divided the elements of writing by different days of the week; “I would set it up to where day one we’re doing this, day two we’re doing this, by this day, you’re typing your final draft.” Participants 2, 3, and 5 aligned their time management of teaching writing with the school-imposed system. Examples from the participants school-imposed time management were the Writer’s Workshop Model, which is a school’s designated time to teach writing. Participant 5 did not feel as though the school’s allotted time was enough time to teach writing, declaring “you have to meet their standard of time, rather than what the kids really need.” Participant 4 did not have a time management system for teaching writing, stating, “I feel like there is little time to emphasize just writing in isolation.”

Theme V: Pre and Post Writing Assessments (Yes, No, and Supplement)

Pre and post writing assessments help teachers understand what students already know/have learned on the writing spectrum. Rini and Cahyanto (2020) found that within elementary schools, writing assessments are needed to guide and stimulate students in writing, starting from exploring ideas, organizing ideas, compiling a framework, to producing complete written works. When asked whether pre and post assessments are administered to their students, Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5 revealed that they do give pre and post writing assessments to their students. Participant 2 provided a more detailed response, stating, “Yes, like every three months.” Participant 3 revealed that although they did not give a pre or posttest to students, the pre and post writing assessments were supplemented with ongoing standardized testing practice materials. Participant 6

explained that they did not give pre and post writing assessments, but evaluated “their work as we go.”

Theme VI: Differentiation (Small Group, Ability Group, Model, and Partner)

Deunk er al. (2018) maintained that differentiation is teaching modified to address the diverse cognitive needs of all students. Participants were asked how they would differentiate instruction for students who write at different levels. Small groups, ability groups, modeling, and partnering students were the themes that emerged from this question. Participants 1, 5, and 6 expressed they would divide students into small groups to differentiate writing instruction. Participant 2 grouped students based on their abilities. Participants 4 and 6 did not view differentiating students by groups as a way to meet the needs of their students who write at different levels. These teachers believed modeling and partnering students was effective for helping struggling writers. Participant 4 stated, “I always model what the writing should look like,” and Participant 3 said, “I will partner the kids and they can help each other.”

Theme VII: Professional Development (Essential, Experience, and Neutral)

Cremin and Oliver (2017) found that professional development with writing can “transform” teachers’ attitudes, self-esteem, and sense of self as a writer. Themes that emerged from the data on this question were essential, experience, and neutral. Most teachers viewed professional development with writing as essential. Participant 3 considered professional development with writing as “heavily needed”. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 6, also placed a positive value on professional development, determining that it was essential. Participant 1, who had minimal experience with professional development

on writing lamenting that “We have not had a lot of training on the writing process.”

Participant 5 had a neutral position, stating, “I’m very in the middle to be honest...I think that a lot of the professional development is geared toward pre COVID teachers and not post COVID teachers.”

Theme VIII: Teachers’ Best Qualities (Emotional Support, Organization, and Modeling)

A. Kent and Brannan (2016) established that a positive attitude brings forth higher teacher self-efficacy which can promote high student achievement in writing. When teachers were asked what their best qualities were when teaching the writing process, themes of emotional support, organization, and modeling emerged. The theme of emotion was prevalent in the responses from participants 3, 4, and 6. Participant 3 pronounced their best quality was the “encouragement” given to students. Participant 4 revealed, “I think I’m a great storyteller.” Participant 6 expressed how much they liked writing. The responses from Participant 1 were focused on organization, as evidenced by the statement of “I’m able to be more hands on with them ... pulling them in small groups.”

Participants 2 and 5 felt their best quality was the ability to model for students.

Theme IX: Final Thoughts (Importance of Writing and Perseverance)

As the interviews came to a close, each participant was asked whether they had any final thoughts. The belief that writing is important and the need for students to persevere emerged from the final responses. Participant 6 admitted to having a great appreciation for author, Lucy Calkins’s writing rubrics. Participant 3 stated, “I wish our system would get a program and stick with it.” Participant 4 expressed that “...every

district needs a writing program.” Participants 1 and 2 maintained perseverance with the writing process, as Participant 1 conveyed “...it’s a work in progress.” Participant 2 responded, “...we’re trying to express it here at my school to have the students, no matter how young or old...write across the curriculum.”

Research Questions Addressed

Three research questions guided my study. The questions explored the perceptions and experiences of third and fourth grade teachers about the writing process. In this section, I discuss the themes and research questions with which they are aligned.

RQ1: What Are Third and Fourth Grade Teachers’ Perceptions With Teaching the Writing Process?

RQ1 was addressed in Themes I and II. Three participants felt confident when teaching the writing process, whereas the remaining participants did not feel as confident. One participant felt the need to reteach writing methods because students did not seem to fully comprehend the writing process. Two participants revealed their lack of confidence when teaching writing.

When teachers were asked what impact they felt they had on student growth, three participants felt as though they made an impact on students’ writing growth. Of the six participants, Participant 4 is the only participant who felt as though they were ineffective with teaching the writing process. Participants 2 and 3 did not reveal their feelings about having an impact on students’ growth in writing, however, Participant 2 placed an intentional focus on writing and Participant 3 modeled the writing process for students and allowed them to provide peer feedback for each other.

RQ2: What Are the Experiences of Third and Fourth Grade Teachers With Teaching the Writing Process?

RQ2 was addressed in Themes III, IV, V, and VI. Most participants communicated only their best experiences, seeming reluctant to discuss negative experiences. Only Participant 6 was willing to share both their positive and negative events teaching writing. Participant 3 expressed in the early years of teaching they felt much less prepared to teach the writing process than now. The Participant went one to say that through time they were able to hone the skill for teaching writing.

Time management was addressed in Theme IV. Whether personal or school imposed, most participants had a time management system when teaching writing. Participants 1 and 6 developed their own personal systems for managing writing time, whereas Participants 2 and 3 adhered to their schools' time management system for teaching writing. Participants 4 and 5 did not reveal a plan but expressed the difficulty of finding time to include writing.

Pre and posttest administration was discussed in Theme V. Four participants stated they gave pre and posttests to their students. Participant 3 admitted that they did not give students pre and post writing tests, choosing to spend time focusing on preparing students to take their state's standardized assessment throughout the year. Participant 6 discussed not giving pre and posttests to students, feeling that it was better to evaluate students' writing throughout the year.

Differentiating writing instruction for students who write at different levels was the focus of Theme VI. Although grouping students into small groups was discussed by

most participants, partnering students and modeling were also discussed. Along with forming small groups, Participant 1 expressed partnering students to revise each other's writing. Participant 4 discussed modeling for students "what the writing should look like" as a differentiation method.

RQ3: What Do Third and Fourth Grade Teachers Perceive They Need to Be Good Teachers of the Writing Process?

RQ3 was addressed in Themes VII, VIII, and IX. When participants were asked if professional development with writing was necessary, most viewed it as needed to help teachers learn strategies for teaching the writing process. Participant 1 did not provide a direct response as to whether professional development with writing would nurture the teaching of writing, but discussed that they had received "lots" of training on writing because of the new benchmark writing series their organization had received. Participant 6 was neutral, and revealed that professional development with writing within their organization supported pre Covid teachers more than post Covid teachers. Participants' views about their most valuable qualities (Theme VIII) when teaching the writing process were interesting self-assessments. For instance, Participant 4 felt they were a "great storyteller". Other participants identified organizational skills, proficiency in writing strategies, and ability to model for their students as worthy assets for teaching writing.

Theme IX addressed participants' final thoughts, where each participant provided a concluding reflection about writing in general, the value of perseverance, and the need for teaching writing. All participants expressed a passion for making sure their students learned to write. Participants articulated the importance of students being able to write in

order to advance through the grade levels. When prompted, participants did not elaborate on post-secondary or adult needs for writing, seeming to be focused on the elementary stage of their students.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the results of the data analysis of third and fourth grade teachers' responses to the interview questions. I presented the results within this chapter after analyzing data using NVivo and manual coding. Three research questions guided the data collection process. The research questions were developed based on the cognitive process teacher model conceptual framework (Clark & Petersen, 1984). Research questions were also developed based on the secondary framework, Culham's 6+1 traits writing model (Culham, 2018). Interviews were conducted with six teachers. Several themes emerged from data analysis within the cognitive process teacher model and Culham's 6+1 traits model. The themes describe participants' perceptions and experiences with the writing process. The most prevalent data that emerged from the themes were (a) differentiation, (b) experiences, (c) impact on student growth, (d) most valuable qualities, (e) pre and post writing tests, (f) professional development, (g) self-assessment, (h) time management, and (i) belief in the importance of writing. The data revealed the similarities and differences among the participants. Each participant helped deepen my understanding of the perceptions and experiences of third and fourth grade teachers.

Chapter 5 is an interpretation of the findings. I explain how the findings addressed the research questions. Limitations of the study are also discussed. The chapter concludes

with recommendations for future research and a consideration for the implications of the research and study on social change.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this qualitative study, I explored third and fourth grade teachers' perspectives and experiences with the writing process. The study was conducted with six third- and fourth-grade teachers who taught within a southeastern state. Data from individual semistructured interviews with the teachers were analyzed using NVivo and manual coding. Following the coding process, data were categorized and analyzed according to the emergent themes among the participants. Clark and Peterson's (1984) cognitive process teacher model and Culham's 6+1 writing process model served as the frameworks for the study and the data analysis. As a result of the interviews and data analysis, I began to understand the perspectives and experiences of third and fourth grade teachers about the writing process. Throughout the process, I was vigilant to maintain an unbiased position to help ensure credibility and validity.

Nine themes emerged from the data. Each theme helped me understand how third and fourth grade teachers perceived the writing process and the experiences they had with teaching the writing process. In Chapter 5, I explain how my findings connect with the literature in Chapter 2. The limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and implications for social change are also discussed.

Interpretation of Findings

From the data analysis, I identified nine themes: (a) differentiation, (b) professional development, (c) pre and post assessments, (d) time management, (e) impact on student growth, (f) most valuable qualities, (g) self-assessment, (h) experiences, and (i) final thoughts. The identified themes addressed the study's three research questions

and deepened my understanding of third and fourth grade teachers' perspectives and experiences about the writing process after data analysis. The cognitive process teacher model is focused on how a teacher's thoughts impact behavior in the classroom (Clark & Peterson, 1984). The models helped me gain a better understanding of how teachers can work with their students to teach writing and guided my literature search. Following the premises of the model, I developed my interview questions for the study. In this section, I compare the findings for each research question to those from the literature review.

RQ1: What Are Third and Fourth Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching the Writing Process?

Teachers' perceptions of the writing process could influence how they approach teaching writing and what is important in the writing process (Woodard, 2018). Self-assessment and student growth were the themes that emerged from RQ1. One participant expressed that the point of writing a "basic" paragraph is for students to see how "boring" it might be and how they can add to the paragraph to make it more "interesting" and "descriptive."

When teachers who teach writing have high self-efficacy, students perform better with writing (Hall et al., 2015; Koster et al., 2017). Student growth was a theme that emerged from the data. I asked participants how they perceive their impact on student growth in writing. Some, but not all, participants felt their students were making progress with writing and attributed the success to their own teaching ability. Other participants discussed their impact on student growth as "placing an intentional focus on writing" and being a comforter, model, and provide peer feedback to students. One participant

revealed a lack of confidence that their impact on student growth in writing was positive, stating it was not “great.”

RQ2: What Are the Experiences of Third and Fourth Grade With Teaching the Writing Process?

Experiences, pre and post assessments, time management, and differentiation were the themes that emerged from RQ2. Pre and post writing assessments allow teachers to gain insight on their students’ writing progress. Teachers should be able to measure students writing skills so that they can appropriately plan instruction (Dockrell et al., 2019). Participants were asked whether they administer pre- and post-assessments to their students. Most participants revealed that they do some form of pre/post writing assessments with their students.

Graham (2019) found that most teachers spend little time teaching writing to students. Participants were asked how they manage time when teaching the writing process. I found the teachers’ responses interesting, in that all participants felt time to write was important, but the ways in which time was managed varied. Some participants said they had their own system of managing time when teaching writing, having students write in small groups to manage writing time or by having students work on a different part of the writing process each day. A few participants expressed frustration about not having enough time to teach writing, using the phrase, “little time to emphasize” writing. Following their school’s allotted time frame and/or design for writing, which was insufficient, were the feelings of the other two participants.

Teachers should differentiate instruction to match the needs of students rather than use a one-size-fits-all approach (Van Geel et al., 2019). Participants were asked how they differentiate instruction for students who write at different levels. Although different themes emerged from the data, all participants' responses were in support of differentiating writing instruction for students. Most participants discussed placing students in small groups as a method to differentiate writing instruction for students who write at different levels. Modeling how to write a "basic" paragraph for students after allowing them to choose a topic was another frequent strategy. One participant emphasized that teachers and students should not be "stressed" about differentiating writing instruction, rather build on their capabilities.

RQ3: What Do Third and Fourth Grade Teachers Perceive They Need to Be Good Teachers of the Writing Process?

Professional development, valuable qualities, and final thoughts were themes that materialized from RQ3. Professional development with writing can transform teachers' attitudes, self-esteem, and sense of self as a writer (Cremin and Oliver, 2017). Most participants were in favor of professional development to nurture their teaching of writing; however, two teachers revealed a lack of enthusiasm for the professional development they received, indicating the experience was inadequate or not relevant to their needs. All teachers shared that the workshops or professional development sessions seemed focused on a single process rather than encouraging teachers to adapt practices to their own skill sets. Some teachers related that practices recommended in the sessions were not practical in actual implementation due to time restraints. The concluding

thoughts of four participants revealed they viewed writing as a standard within their schools' curriculum that needed revision.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were identified for this study. Sumpter et al. (2023) found that limitations greatly increase honesty, openness, and transparency to the benefit of the scientific community and society. One limitation was the challenge in achieving the original goal of ten participants for the sample size. Although I sent numerous invitations over the course of several months to teachers who had taught the writing process to third and/or fourth grade students for at least 3 years within a southeastern state, I was only able to secure six participants. A second limitation was that data were collected in a short time span, rather than a long, longitudinal study which did not allow an understanding of change or stability over time. My own experience as an educator and feelings about the importance of writing may be viewed as a third weakness for this study. However, I maintained a determination to consciously respect the participants' responses and guard against influencing responses or interpreting data based on my own bias, as I focused solely on asking the interview questions that were listed on my Interview Guide. I also uploaded the audio from each interview into the Otter.ai software to produce transcripts which helped maintain the respect of each participant's responses. I conducted a member check by sending each participant an email with the transcription of their interview attached. Participants were asked to review their transcript to ensure the responses accurately reflected their responses to the interview questions. I did not receive any contrary responses from participants.

Recommendations

This study was focused on exploring third and fourth grade teachers' perspectives and experiences about the writing process. Based on the findings within this study, there are a few recommendations to consider for future research. One recommendation is for teachers to receive ongoing professional development with writing. The professional development workshops should not be designed for teachers to "sit and get", but to be engaged in collaborative activities that could improve their ability and nurture their self-esteem, when teaching writing to students. DeSmedt et al. (2019) found that teachers' self-efficacy is a key factor in the improvement of writing education and that to improve the quality of teachers' instruction it is essential to enhance their feeling of self-efficacy by training them in applying effective writing practices.

A second recommendation is that teachers across the southeastern state in which my study took place be allowed to share their perspectives and experiences with writing to their peers and school administrators. Most teachers spend little time teaching writing (Graham, 2019). Allowing teachers time to discuss their feelings and experiences with writing could help explain why teachers are spending little time teaching the task. Providing teachers with the opportunity to discuss their feelings and experiences with writing could also help administrators, curriculum coaches, and teachers develop a strategy to potentially remedy this issue.

My third recommendation is for schools within the southeastern state in which my study took place to develop a writing-only class for elementary students. Half of students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 lack the ability to write proficiently (NAEP, 2017). Developing a

class that only focuses on writing skills could be highly beneficial to struggling writers. The class would not be designed to “take writing out of the hands of teachers”, but provide additional enrichment to students.

A final recommendation is to replicate or expand this study to explore middle-school and/or high school teachers’ perceptions and experiences with teaching the writing process.

Implications

This qualitative study contributed to filling the gap in the literature on elementary teachers’ perceptions and experiences with teaching the writing process, as there is limited literature available on this topic. Half of grade level students lack writing proficiency (NAEP, 2017). The lack of writing proficiency among many grade level students continues once students enter colleges and universities. Recent studies reveal that many college students lack the ability to write at the collegiate level (NCES, 2019; Dockrell et al.; 2019). This study could enlighten administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders on the importance of allowing elementary teachers to share their perspectives and experiences with teaching writing.

Participants’ responses helped deepen my understanding about elementary teachers’ perspectives and experiences with teaching writing. My two primary revelations were (a) most participants agreed that professional development was needed to help them teach the writing process and (b) not enough time is allotted to teach writing. Also revealed through the analysis of the data was the participants’ belief in differentiating writing instruction for students who write at different levels, such as placing students in

small groups. Participants also expressed a feeling of making an impact on student growth in writing that was progressive.

Conclusion

Six participants who taught the writing process to third and fourth graders in a southeastern state participated in this qualitative study. Through semistructured interviews, participants were asked about their perceptions of themselves as teachers of writing, instructional methods, and their perceptions of professional development with writing. The conceptual framework for this study was based on Clark and Peterson's (1984) cognitive process teacher model, and the secondary framework for this study was Culham's (2018/) 6+1 Traits of Writing Model. This study contributed to the literature on elementary teachers' perceptions and experiences about the writing process and increased knowledge on the subject.

The process of gaining the perspectives and experiences of elementary teachers about the writing process is important in strengthening the writing ability of grade level students. NAEP (2017) reported that half of students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 lack writing proficiency. Data from my study showed that teachers feel that professional development is needed to help them teach the writing process and most lacked confidence with teaching writing to their students. Therefore, acquiring elementary teachers' perspectives about writing can help stakeholders understand how to help teachers become stronger and more confident with teaching writing. I believe the findings from this study can be used by administrators to make meaningful decisions on professional development for teachers in the area of writing.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Hello! Thank you for consenting to do this Zoom interview in my quest to collect data for my study. I understand that your time is valuable. I would like to remind you that your identity will remain confidential. The responses you provide will be labeled with a code name. You retain the right to discontinue this interview at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let's get started!

RQ1- Qualitative: What are third and fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of teaching the writing process?

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What is your assessment of yourself while teaching students the writing process?
3. What impact do you feel you are having on student growth in the area of writing?

RQ2- Qualitative: What are the experiences of third and fourth-grade with teaching the writing process?

4. How would you describe your best/worst experience with teaching the writing process?
5. How do you manage time when teaching the writing process?
6. Do you administer pre/post writing assessments to your students?
7. How would you differentiate instruction for students who write at different levels?

RQ3- Qualitative: What do third and fourth-grade teachers perceive they need to be good teachers of the writing process?

8. What are your views on professional development for elementary teachers to nurture their teaching of the writing process?

9. What do you consider your most valuable quality or qualities when teaching the writing process?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Thank you so much for your time! You will receive an emailed summary of the results from this study. After 5 years, your responses will be destroyed. Again, thank you!