

EFL Writing Teacher Training and Practices in a Saudi University: A More Vivid Picture

Basim Alamri

English Language Institute, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract—Academic writing is of paramount importance in Higher education institutions, yet EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writing instructors receive inadequate preparation and support (Wang et al., 2020). The present study examined the adequacy and accessibility of professional training provided to writing teachers, alongside an investigation of their pedagogical practices in Saudi university classrooms. The research design collated survey data from 107 EFL writing instructors with follow-up interview data from 8 participants. The survey results showed a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of the importance of academic writing for university success (75.3% agreement) and their implementation of writing instruction, which focused on a product-based approach, with limited incorporation of process or genre-based approaches. The survey also revealed insufficient institutional support for writing-related professional development as a mere 20.6% of teachers received relevant training. The results further emphasized the urgent need for training more than half of the teachers in second language writing pedagogy, academic writing instruction, and feedback strategies. The findings highlighted a tension between pedagogical principles and classroom realities, as teachers often struggled to implement best practices due to heavy teaching loads, large class sizes, and limited curricular flexibility. The research demonstrated both the current challenges and teacher perspectives about existing support mechanisms. Thus, the study informed the current state of EFL writing instruction in Saudi Arabia to guide teacher education and curriculum development and institutional writing development initiatives.

Index Terms—teachers' beliefs, L2 writing, professional development, writing pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Writing in EFL Contexts and the Need for Teacher Preparation

The acquisition of academic writing remains one of the most critical language skills, as many students have been reported to struggle with it in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Hyland, 2003). The written language differs from spoken language since the focus shifts to linguistic structures, text coherence, audience needs, and writing intentions (Hyland, 2022). The facilitation of English as a foreign language is considerably complex, attributable to a lack of consistent written English exposure among students outside classrooms. This is further fueled by time-limited exam systems faced by the educators that stress accuracy over creative writing and student engagement.

Teaching writing effectively in these contexts necessitates beyond subject matter expertise among educators, i.e., specialized pedagogical training to guide student learning through strategic models combined with effective strategies to offer feedback and genre exploration. Writing process approaches recognize that drafting followed by revising, combined with peer interaction, creates a developmental writing sequence (Badger & White, 2000). Genre-based instruction enables students to grasp both the social objectives and structural elements of various text categories (Hyland, 2003; Swales, 1990). Research demonstrates that several effective writing instruction methods are not frequently implemented in EFL classrooms owing to teachers' preference for conventional methods based on model text imitation and grammatical error correction (Al-Nafjan & Alhawsawi, 2022).

The lack of readiness of writing instructors remains the prominent cause for this learning gap. Hyland (2022) stated that some pre-service education programs for teachers in EFL settings failed to impart the knowledge of teaching writing as an independent language skill. Teachers have been reported to often struggle in creating writing assignments and assessing student work, followed by providing constructive feedback (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). The absence of formal training opportunities in writing pedagogy leads instructors to rely on instinctive or traditional teaching methods, thereby resulting in a mismatch with the demands of modern research findings about language learning and academic literacy.

The process of writing encompasses structuring linguistic elements together with cognitive processes and socio-cultural practices. Academic writing demands specialized knowledge of disciplinary conventions owing to its specific contextual requirements (Hyland, 2022). Students are required to frame grammatically correct sentences, organize their arguments, synthesize sufficient evidence, followed by citing their sources. University academic discourse requirements are relatively more challenging for EFL learners as they face three main barriers, including background knowledge deficits, limited exposure to target language texts, and restricted access to required academic discussions (Lillis & Scott,

2007). Teaching professionals must function as essential connectors between these two domains, but their ability to do so largely depends on the focus and quality of their professional development.

B. The Role of Writing in Saudi Higher Education

Saudi Arabia has elevated the status of English to an educational and scientific, and commercial language to support the Saudi Vision 2030 reform initiative. English serves as the main subject for university students since it is the medium of instruction among all the grades in public schools and for STEM subjects at the higher education (Elyas & Picard, 2018). Students require English language proficiency, including academic writing skills, as these have become foundational for academic achievements and career progression (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017).

The latest findings on English writing education in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions reveal the continued challenges (Al-Nafjan & Alhawsawi, 2022). One of the major challenges for scarce opportunities for student feedback and teacher-student conferences includes large classrooms with brief instructional periods (Aloairdhi & Alhojailan, 2024). Typically, in the Saudi context, the writing curriculum at educational institutions focuses on five-paragraph essay writing and grammar exercises, yet avoids teaching academic genres alongside digital skills and subject-based writing assignments (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The educational methods used today may prevent students from developing writing abilities that match real-world academic or workplace requirements.

The writing pedagogy training remains underrepresented in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs across Saudi Arabia (Aloairdhi & Alhojailan, 2024). English teacher preparation institutions in Saudi Arabia focus on TESOL methods, literature, and linguistics with little focus on writing-specific instruction (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). University writing instructors may often begin teaching without proper training about the writing process and formative assessment rubrics. In the Saudi context, writing instruction at several institutions lacks proper institutional support (Alamri, 2021). Although few educational institutions have writing centers, these centers are used minimally due to a lack of sufficient teaching assistants and resources, and time to support their students. Assessment policies have not been found to emphasize process-based teaching approaches, which results in instructors emphasizing grammatical accuracy and basic sentence coherence instead of focusing on conceptual development and editing (Al-Nafjan & Alhawsawi, 2022). Limitations in teaching ability may severely impede instructional efficiency while simultaneously increasing teacher stress and leading to burnout.

C. The Importance of Studying Teacher Beliefs and Practices

The complete understanding of writing education requires a thorough analysis of both syllabi and textbooks and teachers' fundamental beliefs, which direct their instructional decisions (Borg, 2015). Teachers usually function outside isolation as their classroom methods are likely to develop from multiple elements, including their educational background, institutional requirements, their personal teaching history, and their understanding of student capabilities, to name a few. Several studies have shown that well-informed teachers fail to implement new practices because they lack sufficient time, support, and confidence (Farrell & Ives, 2015).

Currently, the Saudi educational environment lacks sufficient empirical research about writing teacher perceptions and practices at universities (Al-Nafjan & Alhawsawi, 2022; Aloairdhi & Alhojailan, 2024). The existing literature focuses mainly on issues surrounding student writing and curriculum transformation alongside general language teaching obstacles. However, there is a severe dearth in information related to the current understanding of writing instructors' views on writing importance, their choice of instructional methods, institutional support, and professional development requirements.

The national drive for educational reform alongside academic excellence demands a thorough analysis of writing instruction by educators at Saudi universities. This research will both reveal current teaching practices and create foundations for developing enhanced and tailored training programs, curricular changes, and institutional policies that strengthen academic writing performance. This research addresses the need to conduct a thorough evaluation of writing teacher preparation and practice at a Saudi university. The study investigated four central questions through a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design:

1. What do writing teachers believe about the importance of writing in their programs and classes?
2. What writing practices do teachers engage in?
3. What support do teachers receive for teaching and learning writing?
4. What are writing teachers' training needs?

The study combined quantitative survey data with qualitative interview findings to achieve both an extensive and detailed understanding. It also includes direct statements from frontline instructors who teach writing to students but encounter multiple responsibilities, ambiguous standards, and insufficient training opportunities. The present research adds value to writing teacher education literature attributable to its focus on under-examined educational settings. The study fills an essential knowledge gap regarding teaching and supporting writing in Saudi higher education institutions. It further provides useful recommendations for educational policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher training specialists who want to enhance writing education and develop teacher readiness for complex language instruction.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examines the main topics related to EFL writing instruction for teachers through a focus on university teaching in Saudi Arabia. The review examined teachers' beliefs about writing while exploring instructional practices, institutional support, and training needs.

A. Teachers' Beliefs About Writing

The fundamental role of teachers' beliefs in shaping classroom practice arises from their personal understandings, assumptions, and instructional judgments (Borg, 2015). The beliefs held by educators about writing instruction determine the types of writing content taught, writing formats, and feedback approaches used in their classrooms. The EFL research demonstrates that majority of teachers perceive writing as vital for academic success, yet they frequently face institutional structural barriers that create teaching conflicts (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Lee, 2013).

So far, the recognition of writing as a fundamental English component has not translated into visible developments in Saudi Arabia's curriculum design or classroom teaching practices (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). The marginalization of writing in official guidelines urges teachers to adopt traditional teaching approaches that emphasize grammar and structure above all else. The institution's conflicting priorities between teaching content and test preparation threaten to diminish teachers' positive beliefs on writing instruction (Elyas & Picard, 2018).

B. Instructional Practices in Writing Classrooms

Different EFL contexts implement diverse writing instructions based on curriculum standards, along with institutional capabilities and teachers' teaching abilities. The product approach has traditionally controlled EFL writing instruction because it emphasizes students reproducing models through correct form and structure (Aloairdhi & Alhojailan, 2024; Badger & White, 2000). The teaching method follows the format of traditional examination-based education since it places emphasis primarily on accurate responses and strict adherence to structure. The process approach to writing, on the other hand, teaches students to view the process of writing as an ongoing development that includes brainstorming, followed by drafting and then revising and peer feedback (Hyland, 2003). Genre-based instruction advises students about text functions in particular academic or professional environments (Martin & Rose, 2008). The literature supports the effectiveness of process and genre approaches, but their implementation remains restricted in EFL contexts.

EFL teachers implement controlled composition, translation tasks, and fill-in-the-blank exercises because these strategies aid students practice writing while reducing their exposure to genuine writing activities (Hyland, 2003). Teachers' feedback mainly concentrates on grammatical errors rather than addressing organizational structure or content development, or audience understanding (Lee, 2013). Certain instructors in the field of TESOL have recently been found trying to use more progressive teaching methods. Educational methods evolve through this practice, even though their practical implementation remains inconsistent.

Digital writing tools like online collaborative platforms, together with automated feedback systems and corpus tools, remain underutilized in EFL writing instruction (Li, 2023). These tools could remarkably improve student participation while supporting individualized learning (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). The adoption of these tools depends heavily on both institutional technology support and teaching staff abilities in technology-enhanced education.

C. Institutional Support for Writing Instruction

Writing instruction operates within complete institutional frameworks that shape either positive or restrictive teaching environments (Alshammari, 2020). Educational institutions function through administrative policies, curriculum frameworks, and resource availability, which further determine workload distribution, the establishment of writing centers and teaching assistants, and professional development programs.

For instance, the significant numbers of students enrolled in EFL writing courses provide evidence for the challenges that surround difficulties in teaching writing. The management of drafts, along with individual revision support and meaningful feedback delivery, is tedious for teachers who handle writing classes with a class size exceeding 30 students (Richards & Farrell, 2005). The large student-teacher ratios in Saudi writing classes prevent educators from implementing conference sessions and portfolio assessment methods (Al-Hoorie et al., 2021; Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021).

Time constraints also present a significant problem for all institutions. often forces them to adopt surface-level, exam-oriented, or product-based writing practices, prioritizing grammar drills, sentence correction, and rigid essay templates over process writing, genre exploration, or critical engagement. As a result, writing instruction becomes highly compressed, leaving little room for drafting, peer feedback, or individualized scaffolding (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). Surface-level teaching is reported to be a common occurrence while teachers prevent students from working on time-consuming revision or collaborative writing tasks. Teaching staff must create their own materials and assessments because EFL writing curricula, together with institutional writing guidelines, remain absent (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021).

The support structure depends heavily on professional development opportunities for staff members. Research shows that writing-specific professional development opportunities remain uncommon in numerous EFL universities because

they occur infrequently or do not exist. The lack of writing pedagogy, feedback strategies, and assessment practices training prevents teachers from delivering writing instruction to their students (Wang et al., 2020).

The lack of writing centers and academic support services makes the educational situation worse. The North American educational system places writing centers at the center of student support through tutoring services and writing resources, as well as workshops. Many Saudi universities operate without writing centers and minimal writing support services, so the entire burden of teaching falls on classroom instructors.

The institutional perspective, which treats writing as a supplementary soft skill instead of a fundamental academic subject, leads to reduced importance placed on writing instruction compared to grammar, reading, or content education. The devaluation of writing instruction leads to insufficient funding and unrecognized writing teachers' work as well as weak integration of writing throughout the curriculum (Al-Nafjan & Alhawsawi, 2022; Aloairdhi & Alhojailan, 2024; Elyas & Picard, 2018; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

D. Writing Teachers' Professional Training Needs

The effectiveness of writing instruction depends heavily on the quality of preparation received by teachers. Teachers need specialized language knowledge about both linguistic structures and academic and social writing contexts, as well as expertise in designing tasks and writing assessment methods and strategies for supporting struggling writers (Aloairdhi & Alhojailan, 2024). The majority of EFL contexts lack teacher education programs that focus on writing pedagogy.

General TESOL methodology receives most attention in pre-service education programs, but writing instruction receives insufficient differentiation from reading, listening, and speaking instruction. The educational system does not teach new teachers how to deliver explicit writing instructions during their teacher training programs. The available in-service training programs are either generic or too brief or fail to connect with real classroom situations faced by teachers (Borg, 2015). According to Almuwakkil and Alshakhi (2022), teachers demand practical training that includes rubric development and academic writing scaffolding, and peer review techniques.

Professional development programs that focus on writing instruction show increasing demand throughout Saudi Arabia. Alharbi and Albelihi (2023) showed that Saudi university EFL instructors actively pursue academic writing workshops and short courses about feedback and EAP/ESP writing. The study revealed that instructors face challenges because they lack suitable and meaningful training opportunities.

The training programs for teachers lack essential information about second language writing research. The teaching staff remains unaware about current writing instruction methods which include corpus-based tools, rhetorical genre theory, and multilingual writing perspectives. According to Richards and Farrell (2005), professional learning communities, reflective teaching journals, and collaborative action research have been proposed as sustainable teacher development models.

Saudi Arabia has yet to develop Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs which integrate writing instruction into disciplinary education (Alharbi & Albelihi, 2023). Teachers responsible for preparing students for academic writing in STEM fields or professional communication lack sufficient knowledge about content and genre awareness to deliver effective instruction.

The literature shows that writing instruction in EFL contexts is shaped by multiple factors which include teacher beliefs, pedagogical practices, institutional support, and professional development. Writing instruction remains challenging for teachers because they face training deficiencies, large classes, restrictive curricula, and insufficient institutional support. The Saudi educational system faces three main challenges which include limited writing-specific professional development, writing centers absence, and a focus on grammar-based teaching methods. A solution to these issues demands joint efforts between educational institutions to redesign teacher education programs and provide context-relevant professional development and establish writing as a fundamental academic literacy and university education core subject. The current study uses these findings as a basis to study writing instructors' beliefs and practices at a Saudi university while identifying their professional needs. The research aims to direct future teacher education initiatives while developing more effective EFL writing pedagogy for higher education institutions.

III. METHODS

A. Research Design

The research design of this study employed a mixed-methods approach using a sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The research was initiated with a quantitative phase, which collected data through a structured questionnaire distributed to university-level writing teachers. The survey participants underwent semi-structured interviews in the subsequent qualitative phase. This research design enabled researchers to understand writing teachers' beliefs, their practices, institutional support, and professional development needs at a broader level before conducting in-depth examinations of these patterns.

B. Participants

The quantitative study involved 107 university writing instructors from the First Year Program and other programs at a major Saudi university that serves more than 50,000 students. The research data contains participant demographic

information, which appears in Table 1. The university employs 500 English language instructors and faculty members from diverse nationalities who teach in the First Year Program and other programs that teach English language courses. The study used purposive sampling to choose participants who teach academic writing at the tertiary level. The qualitative phase included semi-structured interviews with 8 teachers who came from the same participant pool and demonstrated different teaching experiences, educational backgrounds, and institutional roles, as indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

Demographic Information		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	43	41.3
	Female	61	58.7
Academic rank	Teaching assistant	4	3.8
	Lecturer/language instructor	44	42.3
	Assistant professor	38	36.5
	Associate professor	16	15.4
	Professor	2	1.9
Age in years	< 30	0	0
	30-40	37	35.6
	41-50	42	40.4
	> 50	25	24.0
Highest Earned Degree	Bachelor	4	3.8
	Master	60	57.7
	Doctorate	40	38.5
Discipline	English Language Institute	44	42.3
	Faculty of Applied Studies	10	9.61
	Faculty of Sciences	9	8.65
	Faculty of (Applied) Medicine	8	7.96
	Faculty of Arts & Humanities	5	4.81
	Other	28	26.92

TABLE 2
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN QUALITATIVE PHASE

No.	Name	Nationality	Gender	Degree	Academic Title	Discipline
1	Amal	Saudi	Female	Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	TESOL
2	Fatimah	Saudi	Female	Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	TESOL
3	Nasser	Saudi	Male	Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	Medicine
4	Ahmad	Non-Saudi	Male	Ph.D.	Language Instructor	TESOL
5	Rajab	Non-Saudi	Male	M.A.	Language Instructor	Applied Linguistics
6	Abdullah	Non-Saudi	Male	B.A.	Language Instructor	Applied Linguistics
7	Khaled	Non-Saudi	Male	B.A.	Language Instructor	TESOL
8	Roger	Non-Saudi	Male	B.A.	Language Instructor/ PDU coordinator	Education

* Pseudonyms are used to protect the interviewees' privacy.

C. Data Collection and Analysis

(a). Quantitative Instruments and Procedures

The survey was adopted from Ene and Mitrea (2013) and underwent modifications to match the research objectives during the first phase. The survey had four sections, which aligned with the research questions: (1) beliefs about the importance of writing, (2) writing instructional practices, (3) institutional support, and (4) professional development needs. The instrument used a 5-point Likert scale to measure items, while the pilot test ensured clarity and reliability of the instrument. The survey data underwent statistical analysis through SPSS version 20 before receiving descriptive analysis (e.g., frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations) to reveal patterns and differences between variables. The twenty-seven Likert-scale questionnaire items achieved high reliability through Cronbach's alpha measurement, which produced a value of $\alpha = 0.872$ to detect statistical relationships in responses.

(b). Qualitative Instruments and Procedures

The interview guide was developed based on the initial survey findings, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of key issues identified in the first phase of data collection. The open-ended questions provided participants with space to share their experiences and challenges, along with their ideas about writing instruction and teacher training improvement. The interviews took place in English while being recorded by audio and lasted between 40-60 minutes. The thematic analysis of data used a coding framework that matched the four research questions to enhance the questionnaire results. The development of themes began through inductive methods before receiving refinement through multiple coding iterations. The interpretation phase brought together qualitative data to explain and contextualize the quantitative results.

IV. RESULTS

This section shows findings from the quantitative analysis of survey responses, which align with the four research questions and the emerging themes: (1) teachers' beliefs about the importance of writing, (2) writing practices used by instructors, (3) institutional support for writing instruction, and (4) teachers' professional training needs.

A. Teachers' Beliefs About the Importance of Writing

The survey data indicated that all writing instructors agreed that writing is an essential tool for students to achieve academic progress. A total of 75.3% of the participants rated writing as the "most important" language skill for their students, which was relatively higher than the percentages of speaking (69.4%), reading (64.7%), and listening (47.1%). The results showed that writing instructors consider writing as the basis for language proficiency and academic performance, as well as disciplinary achievements.

Teachers were also asked to rate their level of preparedness to teach writing. The majority of the participants were self-assured about their teaching readiness, as 43.9% said they were "well prepared" while 41.1% said they were "very well prepared." The combined percentage of 85% implies that most instructors had either taken courses in writing or had plenty of teaching experience. However, 15% of respondents admitted to being "poorly prepared," indicating that several instructors lack proper pedagogical training or continuous professional development for writing instruction.

The qualitative responses from the participants' interviews helped to define the reasons behind these beliefs. Abdullah stated that "*writing as a skill forms an essential part of the growth of every student wanting to be able to write different kinds of items during the professional career or college life.*" According to Fatimah, academic writing is "*extremely, extremely important*" for all students in university programs, both native and non-native speakers. Rajab and Nasser also stated that writing is a critical component in all university programs and classes.

B. Writing Practices Teachers Engage in

The survey data indicated that there were many classroom practices in writing instruction, but traditional and product-based approaches seemed to be the most prevalent. The results showed that 58.8% of instructors "very often" corrected grammar in students' papers, and 54.1% of them frequently commented on the ideas and organization of a students' paper. The results showed that teachers provided considerable feedback, with an emphasis on sentences and paragraphs.

However, more interactive and process-oriented practices were reported less frequently. Only 24.7% of teachers "very often" asked students for more than one draft of an assignment, and 27.1% asked the students to review each other's papers. These practices were considered integral to process writing approaches but appeared to be underutilized. Moreover, only 45.9% "very often" explained the grading criteria to students when starting a writing project, which might indicate that grading criteria were not always transparent.

The different teaching methods used were also shown in the answers to the multiple-choice question on educational methods. Some instructors reported the use of communicative, integrated, or problem-based approaches, but the most common methods were grammar-focused and product-based approaches. The selection of these approaches may be due to the following factors: institutional pressure to teach students for exams, many students, and limited professional development opportunities in process and genre-based pedagogies.

C. Institutional Support for Teaching Writing

The participants had differing perceptions on the support and professional development activities (e.g., workshops, conferences, webinars) they had the opportunity to attend from their institution for teaching writing. Professional development (PD) was only available to 15% of the instructors on a monthly basis, while 36.4% attended such events once in a semester. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (48.6%) indicated they attended either zero or one PD event yearly, thus revealing a significant difference between needed professional development opportunities and what institutions provide.

Participants also reported demanding workloads. Many teachers (37.4%) spent between 4 to 6 hours per week planning and preparing for writing classes, while another 45.9% spent more than 4-6 hours per week grading writing assignments. More than 37.6% of the respondents had 31 or more students per class, which means class sizes were too large for effective personalized feedback, revision cycles, or writing conferences.

The participants indicated multiple institutional resources which would enhance their support for student writers, including teaching assistants for coaching and evaluation of student writing and peer mentors for assignment design and assessment, together with dedicated instructional time for writing tasks and department- or college-level writing centers. The participants demonstrated a common understanding of structural obstacles to effective writing education and expressed their wish for increased institutional funding for writing education.

D. Teachers' Professional Training Needs

Participants showed strong and specific interest in professional training specifically designed for improving their writing teaching abilities. The majority of participants (63.6%) identified formal L2 writing pedagogy coursework as their top priority, while an additional 6.5% considered it important. The survey results demonstrate that EFL writing instruction requires specialized teaching methods that standard teacher education programs do not provide. Participants

rated EAP/ESP courses as their top priority (48.6%) followed by training and courses in writing assessment (45.8%). Next, strategies for providing feedback to students based on information from tests and assessment rated as (43%), followed by designing and assessing writing tasks and tests (39.3%), and, finally, participation in professional conferences and meetings (43%).

V. DISCUSSION

This study investigated university writing instructors' views together with their practices, university support, and professional development needs in Saudi EFL settings. The study provides comprehensive details about how writing education appears to instructors and students and shows how actual classroom instruction deviates from theoretical set standards. The following discussion summarizes the main findings by linking them to prior research and contextual issues in the study.

A. Beliefs About the Importance of Writing

The research findings demonstrated that university teachers identify writing as the most critical language skill for students to learn (75.3% considered writing more important than speaking and reading and listening). Previous research by Hyland (2022) and Lillis and Scott (2007) highlighted writing to be vital for academic growth and discipline-specific communication. 85% of teachers who reported being (very) well-prepared in their teaching abilities likely stem from their extensive classroom experience along with their advanced degrees, since most participants had either a master's or a doctorate degree.

Several studies from the region have confirmed the persistent issue of EFL instructors starting to teach writing without proper writing pedagogy training (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). Abdullah emphasized the essential role of academic writing for university programs in the Saudi EFL context, noting that "we need more focus on writing than other academic skills because of the contextual factors that students... in their high schools or in their lower studies... focus on reading and listening and speaking more than writing". Writing does not receive sufficient attention during early education, so Khaled believed students "need to work on this skill" before reaching university. The difference between their expressed beliefs about writing and their actual preparedness indicates that effective writing practice depends on purposeful educational programs combined with mentoring support.

B. Instructional Practices in Writing Classrooms

Traditional methods, including grammar correction and organizational feedback, remain dominant teaching approaches (Aloairdhi & Alhojailan, 2024; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The results show that the limited use of process-oriented techniques, including asking for multiple drafts (24.7%) and peer review (27.1%), indicates a mismatch between research-based writing education and classroom teaching practices.

The constraints of large classes, combined with excessive grading tasks that many participants experienced, lead to this observed gap. Fatimah stated that "there's no, no time [for teaching writing effectively] in terms of the foundation year students" which prevented the full implementation of "the writing process approach". These teaching conditions restrict the implementation of activities that need individualized attention and repeated student participation. The students' ability to meet assignment requirements and learn self-regulated writing techniques may be impaired when teachers spend longer hours grading students' assignments (Lee, 2013).

The observed teaching patterns demonstrate typical issues that exist in EFL classrooms where writing receives insufficient attention because of restricted curricula and excessive focus on individual grammar elements (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021). Roger, a PDU coordinator, confirmed that the teaching staff are "encouraged to use communicative methods" like "process writing". Teachers observed that students "respond better to the product approach" where they "want to have a model or an example of what they're heading towards". The data indicated that instructors place more emphasis on writing instruction, but their teaching methods remain limited by traditional educational methods alongside insufficient training and institutional requirements.

C. Institutional Support: Gaps and Pressures

The results from the survey demonstrated that institutions fail to provide sufficient support for writing education. Professional development opportunities focused on writing were accessible to just 15% of teachers, and more than 20% indicated minimal access to such opportunities. Amal confirmed that the university offered multiple types of support through "weekly memos" which provided details about "workshops" and the "writing center" that provided "one-to-one sessions" and "consultation" but noted that individual choice determined resource utilization. This finding supports Alkodimi and Al-Ahdal's (2021) finding that Saudi universities provide insufficient resources and show little institutional value for writing instruction.

Teachers experience a high workload, including preparing and grading, that reaches 4–6+ hours weekly because of structural barriers that prevent them from adopting best practices such as individual feedback and student conferencing. Fatimah identified two major obstacles in teaching student writing, which stemmed from "35 to 40 students" in her classes and insufficient time to provide appropriate feedback. She emphasized the lack of "professional development courses" at both the university and department levels that focused on teaching writing effectively. Teachers require

additional teaching assistants and writing centers alongside time reassignment to support writing instruction, as international experts Richards and Farrell (2005) recommend.

The absence of writing-focused infrastructure in the university creates additional work for instructors who must handle the teaching of academic writing independently. The university curriculum does not emphasize writing sufficiently according to Abdullah, yet *"the writing center as a separate entity"* can offer *"specialized professionals who not only diagnose the weaknesses, the errors in writing, but can also design special project-based writing to cater to their needs in a customized fashion."* Teachers who lack institutional support through collaborative teaching and writing fellowships and mentoring programs are less likely to attempt new educational methods or maintain writing-intensive courses.

D. Professional Development and Training Needs

The instructors wanted professional development that included systematic and prolonged education focused on teaching writing methods. The survey results showed that courses about L2 writing instruction (63.6%), EAP/ESP (48.6%), assessment (45.8%), and feedback (43%) received the highest rankings from teachers. The current global research supports teacher education in L2 writing instruction because it goes further than standard TESOL teaching methods (Borg, 2015).

Most teachers have to wait at least a semester for PD opportunities, yet they need more frequent professional development. This mismatch demonstrates how institutional training programs do not meet the actual needs of instructors. Teacher development needs more than random workshops because it requires continuous practice, communities together with mentorship programs, and reflective areas where teachers can exchange and modify their instructional methods. Nasser showed minimal interest in *"academic writing sessions"* but actively sought professional development opportunities that focused on *"strategies"* and *"business."* He recommended that writing training should connect to *"research"* to make it more attractive. He also emphasized two important points regarding teacher development by demanding dedicated time for professional growth and external motivators, which include *promotion* or *"annual evaluation"* as incentives.

Most teachers selected specialized writing strategies over general teaching methods as essential for better instruction. The teachers selected professional learning opportunities that targeted specific writing skills over general teaching approaches. The instructors now recognize the specialized knowledge needed for teaching academic writing effectively while teaching English in Saudi Arabia is linguistically and culturally complex. Abdullah emphasized that *"some teachers lack the proper methodology for teaching writing,"* as many were *"educated in grammar translation methods"* rather than the *"communicative approach and the modern, process-oriented approach to writing"* that *"demands a lot of diligence from [the] teacher"*. He supported contextualized training for teachers which addresses classroom-specific *"problems and solutions"* instead of providing *"general"* workshops.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to examine writing teacher beliefs and their instructional practices, institutional support, and training needs in a Saudi university context. The findings demonstrated that teachers maintain a unified view about writing's academic significance and simultaneously demonstrated motivation for better pedagogical approaches. Despite the stress on the importance of writing, they maintained product-oriented approaches, while process-based and student-centered methods remain restricted.

Research conducted earlier has demonstrated that EFL curricula fail to value writing sufficiently because of institutional and structural barriers. The teachers display high levels of self-assessment readiness, yet their classroom actions often result from classroom size constraints and insufficient training, and a lack of educational support systems that also appear in regional research.

The research identifies multiple critical possibilities for development in this direction. The participants demonstrated a strong interest in professional development that focuses on teaching second language writing and academic writing (EAP/ESP) as well as assessment and feedback methods, which align with current best practices for writing teacher education. The interest in skill-specific education above general teaching methods shows how Saudi EFL instructors now recognize the unique knowledge needed for teaching writing effectively.

This research makes an important contribution to the under-investigated domain of academic writing education in Saudi universities. The study demonstrates both teaching staff dedication and institutional barriers to writing instruction while showing the necessity for coordinated institutional strategies to enhance writing instruction. Two possible steps are recommended to enhance writing instruction: creating writing centers and decreasing student-teacher ratios. These steps allow for personalized feedback and revision, along with designing writing-specific professional development programs that match local academic requirements and integrating process-based and genre-informed writing methods into all language curriculum levels.

Future research should investigate how writing-focused professional development programs affect students over time and analyze students' experiences with writing instruction across different academic subjects. Research about student experiences with different writing pedagogies would create valuable knowledge to enhance writing results. Writing

instruction in EFL contexts, especially in Saudi Arabia, will remain essential for student academic achievement and language development because writing importance continues to rise in global professional and academic fields.

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Basim Alamri is an Associate Professor in the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. His research interests revolve around topics related to L2 academic writing for publication, including genre studies and corpus linguistics, EAP/ESP, and technology in the classroom.