

International Perspectives on Writing Curricula and Development

A Cross-Case Comparison

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Chapter 11

We are similar, but different in writing curriculum and instruction

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Many social factors shape how writing is perceived and valued and how it is taught. These factors include culture, history, ideologies and features of community and of the schooling system (after Bazerman, 2016). This notion guides our final chapter, which examines the case studies of writing in the school systems of different countries, presented in the previous chapters. Our approach was to treat the cases as qualitative data, reading them iteratively to extract themes within three broad dimensions. The first of these involved identifying factors that are viewed as shaping how writing is valued and taught within a country. Then, the second dimension related to any patterns or differences in how writing is viewed or valued. To infer this, using the theoretically informed lens of discourses of writing (DoW), we examined the positioning of writing in the curricula and official documents, as presented in each of the case studies. The only guidance given to the authors in writing their chapters was to consider their analysis of curricula and official documents in relation to the DoW. Authors took varying approaches as a result; in some, the DoW framework served more as an overlay, post-hoc, to view the inductive analysis generated. Thus, we employ the DoW as a wide lens to frame discussion; its features allow us to highlight certain aspects and the resulting similarities and differences that can be inferred are enlightening. Where possible, we consider if and how the social factors previously discussed as operating in a particular context are reflected in the nature of this official discourse. Finally, the social factors influencing and the emphases identified in the discourses of official documents are considered in relation to the third dimension; namely, instructional practices that the chapters suggest are prevalent in writing classrooms in the various case study countries. We reflect on the internal consistency across discourse and practice and consider the nature of any gaps between espoused theory in official documents and the instantiation of this theory in practice. Within each of the three dimensions, the analysis proceeded by identifying tentative themes, together with the supporting data from the chapters, and assembling them in table form. In this chapter, the major themes are italicised as we illustrate them using case study examples, within each of the three sections: social and contextual factors that

shape writing curricula; the DoW reflected in curricula and official documents; and classroom practice and the relationship with official discourse.

Social and contextual factors that shape writing curricula

To the social factors that Bazerman (2016) identified with respect to culture, historical/philosophical traditions, ideologies and community, we add the organisation and features of the schooling system and the role that theory and research play in shaping writing curricula and related official material. The majority of the chapters' authors refer to factors that shape their official documents, like curricula, and that impact the pedagogical practices in writing. At times, within a country, the levers impacting curriculum are different from those influencing pedagogy. The chapters vary in the extent to which they discuss in any detail factors that influence how their country officially positions writing and how it is taught, but there is some consistency across countries regarding which of the factors warrant mention. We present the authors' and our inferences regarding likely outcomes from different sources of influence and we subsequently consider the nature of the discourses represented in the curricula and other official documents, and the implementation of curricula.

There is a general agreement, internationally and among our cases, that *writing performance is unsatisfactory* in relation to political and community aspirations. This is reflected in the chapters in various statements; these range from global to specific. Some statements focus on the level of performance and others on preparedness for future study and careers. In Germany, for example, adolescents are considered to have "severe difficulties" in writing, particularly marked at lower secondary school; in the *Haupt* and *Gesamtschule* (both types of school with a high percentage of disadvantaged students and those with a migration background), half of the students produced texts in German that were evaluated as incoherent. Similarly, in Chile, assessment results show narrative and expository texts written by 6th graders as presenting significant difficulties for the reader with respect to coherence. Results from the most recent census in Hong Kong found that less than a third of its residents reported having adequate writing ability in English. Lack of university readiness with respect to writing is cited as an issue in Norway. In Denmark, the emphasis is not so much on a lack of performance by students but a lack of performance in terms of implementing the multi-modal notion of writing espoused in the curriculum and, thus, not preparing students for the twenty-first-century society.

An interesting observation arises out of these views in terms of considering "what is" and "what could or should be" in terms of writing performance. The standards set for writing (what should be), in most jurisdictions, are aspirational; they derive from the views of professionals and sometimes from

an analysis of apparent curricula demands. The development of standards, in general, has taken a non-empirical approach; they are seldom based on systematically gathered empirical data about students' actual writing performance at different levels of schooling. So, while writing achievement is generally viewed as an ongoing problem (*TIME* magazine in 1975 had a cover page with the title, "Why Johnny Can't Write"), arguably, what is demanded of writers in compulsory schooling changes with society's demands. The achievement goal posts may be shifting (as in the case of Denmark with an emphasis on multi-media texts, but where instruction is not keeping pace) and/or the goals encapsulated in standards may be insufficiently grounded in data that reflect reality.

Where chapters provide an historical overview of curricula and assessment policy, there is frequent mention of a *trajectory towards accountability and outcomes-based educational reforms* to address this lack of performance. In the United States, the way writing is evaluated has been strongly influenced by the accountability-based reform initiatives of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries with the legislation of successive presidents, maintain the authors of the chapter, and the attempt to implement a "Common Core" set of standards across US states arguably intensified this long-established outcomes-based emphasis. Such accountability-focused policy initiatives seem to be accelerated where there are (de jure or de facto) top-down policy-making processes. In the case of Uzbekistan, which has only recently begun implementing outcomes-based reforms that will result in a new nationwide exam system, the top-down process of policy formulation and implementation may trace back to the first wave of educational reforms in the Soviet Union, when mandatory standards and curricula had to be adopted across all republics.

Reform approaches varied across the case studies but many countries looked to the key competencies of the OECD and reforms were certainly characterised by a *movement towards ostensibly more rigorous (i.e., standardised, large-scale, high stakes and mandated) means of achieving accountability* at local and national levels. Often, the catalyst for such policy reforms, and the rationale for them, comes from national data regarding performance, particularly those data from international testing. *International tests of achievement have been identified as exerting significant influence on the push for curriculum development* in the last 20-plus years. While the early International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) studies attempted to test writing development internationally, it proved problematic to obtain an agreed upon valid and reliable definition of writing quality to use in the assessment. Denmark, however, cites its performance in the 1993–1994 studies as a "pretext" to undertake reform. Currently, as the German chapter points out, although the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) claims to be a test of literacy and numeracy, there is no writing test in PISA. This simply reinforces the widely accepted but misguided notion that literacy, of which writing is a part, can be measured largely in terms of reading performance.

The phenomenon of “PISA shock” (or from similar, earlier IEA studies) was noted by several of the case study countries (e.g., Germany, Denmark and Norway) as a catalyst for a political push for new measures in curriculum and assessment. In Norway, where scores were not significantly different from the international average, it was a case of comparing their results to those of similar countries such as Finland that performed much better. Results challenged Norway’s view (as similar, still above average results did later, in New Zealand) that it had one of the “best” school systems in the world. To be 21st out of 28 countries, in 2000, was a “disappointment” for Germans. This dissatisfaction with performance may also involve a discussion regarding performance gaps, but this issue is highlighted differentially across chapters. In Chile, the United States and New Zealand, performance gaps in literacy and resulting inequities are mentioned; New Zealand, for example, is described as high performance, low equity, with the largest variability in achievement in the PISA data and this is viewed as a significant equity issue as particular groups of students are over-represented in the underachievement. Research in the United States shows that students with disabilities and from historically marginalised communities receive variable opportunities for writing that are the root causes for different achievement outcomes.

Political influence on curricula is acknowledged explicitly in some chapters. The notion of a “contested” linguistic space within a country is seen clearly in the case of Uzbekistan where changes in prevailing ideologies have shaped which languages are taught and how they are taught. While instructional materials for writing in Uzbek and Russian languages reflect a skills discourse that may connect to a “persistent influence of former Soviet educational practices in Uzbekistan,” L3 English writing materials emphasise a social practices discourse that connects to Western European communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches linked to the Common European Framework. In the chapter on England, reading and writing performance of students is described as a core political concern, underpinned by ideological positions around English language and culture. According to the chapter authors, the curriculum has always been subject to high political control, reflecting shifting ideological stances, and this has resulted in an increasingly high-stakes assessment and accountability culture. The curriculum and the national assessment culture there are inextricably linked. Similarly, governmental influences were identified as playing a part in Chilean and Hong Kong curriculum design. In Chile, curriculum standards are designed by the Ministry of Education and approved by the National Education Council; in Hong Kong, the government designs and administers territory-wide assessments.

Our cases illustrate that where political pressure or, in some cases, tradition, supports a focus on high-stakes assessment, then the influence of this can be far reaching. Almost all of the countries represented by our case studies have at least some such high-stakes assessments, although these may not occur

throughout schooling and may not rely solely on large-scale, standardised exams; nor does it seem that all such assessments examine writing. Denmark, for example, does not test until the end of lower secondary. However, the writing test has recently become part of a high-stakes examination system previously involving other grades and other subjects, which students must pass at a certain average level in order to access upper-secondary or vocational education. New Zealand has national qualification assessments (largely internally assessed and moderated) only in the last three years of schooling (16–18-year-olds) and specified credits in literacy need to be obtained for university entrance. Norway has exams (which a student must pass) as well as teacher assessment for the leaving certificate at the end of secondary school but with no test of writing specifically. Germany's nationwide literacy assessment programme evaluates performance in reading and orthography, focusing in on features that are most easily measured, and the chapter's authors explain that this leads to a lack of knowledge regarding students' writing competence.

Where there is ongoing examination or high-stakes testing throughout schooling, our authors comment on its far-reaching influence. Uzbekistan, with no national writing data available, is perhaps alone in seeing “potential advantages in the collection of nationwide writing assessment data” as part of “curriculum reforms that include benchmarking to international standards.” More commonly, in cases where large-scale testing programmes are already established, authors in this volume have questioned their consequential validity, highlighting unintended *teach-to-the-test effects*, as teachers focus less on official curriculum descriptions of outcomes for writing than on how these are expressed as *narrow constructs of competence, reflected in standardised writing exam tasks*. Examinations in Hong Kong are considered to have substantial influence on the style of teaching and learning in schools. An emphasis on such testing can mean that important parts of the curriculum are neglected, like in the example from Hong Kong where the curriculum talks of promoting values, attitudes and critical thinking but these tend to be ignored, as they are not tested. The authors of the chapters on the United States and Chile consider the mandated respective standards and associated standardised assessments in their countries to have a considerable influence on, and to constrain, what is emphasised in their classrooms. They note the types of writing undertaken and evaluated are confined to the narrow set of text types measured by the tests. In England, national assessment of writing at ages 11 and 16 has been criticised by teachers and literacy education researchers for an ideological privileging of technical accuracy at the expense of creativity, expression and communication. The authors of the chapter on England note washback effects, arising from the focus of assessment, in terms of pedagogy, whereby it shapes practice; recent research, including their own, is showing the link between curriculum content, testing and teachers' pedagogical practices in teaching writing. Teachers in England have reported paying most attention to word-level work in writing, followed by teaching of handwriting,

spelling and sentence-level work, with planning, reviewing and revising only addressed infrequently. Conversely, in countries like New Zealand, with no mandated national testing and now no standardised reporting, the Ministry of Education has no overview of nationwide performance until students are around 16 years of age. This can make it more challenging to devise targeted, nationally offered and Ministry sponsored professional development for teachers. However, schools, which function autonomously, can use a national tool, *Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning: Writing (e-asTTle: Writing)*, a diagnostic measure which has associated normative data from a large representative sample, to evaluate how their students are placed against national average performance and rates of progress. So, detailed standardised data are available for planning both instruction and teacher professional learning; these data are just not in the form of high-stakes tests and they are under the control of individual schools to utilise when they deem appropriate.

At times, when the value and usefulness of testing or other assessment is questioned, there is *pushback* by various groups, notably parents and teachers. This has resulted in removal or modification of assessment. As a result of teacher and parent opposition, Hong Kong removed the Territory-Wide System Assessment (TSA) for primary level-3 students, a test viewed as too difficult and as one that had resulted in a significant emphasis on drilling methods. In Denmark, the 2014 curriculum named “Simplified Common Standards” was, in fact, the chapter authors note, a “complexification” consisting of more than a hundred competence goals, many of which referred to writing. Serious critique from Danish scholars and teacher educators has now, in a rather non-transparent political process, led to a minor revision of the curriculum changing the status of the most detailed goals from mandatory to voluntary guidelines. Surprisingly, the high-stakes writing exam has not been an issue for public debate or pushback; rather, it has been established under the radar. The election of a new government in New Zealand, with a different ideology, led to the removal of mandated reporting against National Standards in Reading, Writing and Mathematics in 2018. These were standards about which the profession had been vocal in their disapproval because of the danger of the data being used to compile “league tables” of schools; this opposition was despite the fact that the decisions regarding the individual student meeting a standard were based on an overall teacher judgement. In England, teachers, teacher educators and teacher unions have repeatedly spoken out strongly against national assessments and even engaged in boycotts of testing, as in 2010. Parents have been supportive regarding the removal of testing of primary school children, believing that tests caused stress and their children should be stimulated by more enriching activities and projects. As the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were implemented and modified in a majority of US states, they faced considerable critique and resistance, including “opt out campaigns” which, the chapter authors claim, detracted from the validity of any results.

Across numerous chapters, there is mention of traditions of school and teacher autonomy, in terms of curriculum content or pedagogy or both and, allied to this, ideas about teacher professionalism as influencing particularly the extent to which curricula are detailed and specific about content, and whether pedagogies are prescribed or strongly recommended. Within a country, there may be variability in what is imposed and mandated and what is offered as guidance. In many cases, curricular documents emphasised teacher autonomy by making explicit distinctions between curriculum objectives and how these are carried out instructionally. Yet, even in such cases, messages could be mixed. For example, the authors of the US chapter quote a Common Core document stipulating that although the standards “were meant to guide educators with regard to what students should know and be able to do and not dictate particular practices, the CCSS paved the way for some specific changes in instruction called ‘key shifts.’” In other cases, instructional guides, presented as examples of how standards could be achieved, might function as unofficial curricula, as teachers tended to rely on these in practice. In Chile, although curriculum development is centralised and the Curricular Standards are mandatory, the study programmes that propose teaching organisation and pedagogical approaches to achieve the learning objectives in the Curricular Standards, are not. Nevertheless, the chapter authors point out that Chilean teachers “frequently” consult the Programmes when planning instruction. Similarly, the authors of the chapter on England note that the position of a non-statutory document “could be seen to elevate its position.” Even in cases where teachers’ professional autonomy is clearly emphasised and standards are not highly explicit or elaborate, such documents have the potential to steer instruction. In New Zealand, for example, where teacher autonomy and teaching to the individual are embedded in the country’s educational culture, the chapter author notes that “officially sanctioned additional documents are significant.”

In some jurisdictions, the *design of curricula and assessment is centralised and largely top-down* (e.g., Chile, England, the United States and Uzbekistan); in others, there is considerable influential input from various expert and professional groups (e.g., Denmark, Germany, New Zealand and Norway). While in England, curriculum development includes working parties drawn from the professional community, the authors note that decision-making always remains at ministerial level and is aligned to party political interests. Norway’s parliament commissioned a Directorate to draft curricula documents and this involved groups including teachers and researchers, with the drafts available for rounds of public consultation. Though in Denmark education is centralised, there is considerable autonomy for schools and teachers and there is expected variability in curriculum enactment. Likewise, in New Zealand there is a broad national curriculum which does not specify particular content or pedagogy (other than that teaching is a process of inquiry) and autonomous schools are encouraged to contextualise and implement

the curriculum to meet local needs. There the curriculum and the assessment system reflect a *tradition of acknowledging the professionalism of teachers*. In a similar vein, in Norway, teachers are responsible for the methods and foci that they consider will allow students to develop the knowledge and competencies that the syllabus describes. Despite previous observations of the political influence on curriculum and assessment in England, there is little specification of teaching methods for writing, save a reference to explicit teaching of grammar and teacher modelling of writing. However, there are subtle messages. In the primary curriculum, compared to that of secondary, there is provision of considerable detail, including an extensive Glossary of Terms (largely grammatical terms). This is a visual indicator of emphasis and, for an outsider, a negative comment on officialdom's confidence in teacher professionalism.

Larger systems and especially those with a federal or state structure have devised means to allow some flexibility in curriculum, yet ensure some comparability. In the German federal system, states are relatively free to define learning aims and curricula content. The results of this structure can be curricula in the various federal states with different emphases; the situation in writing is illustrated in the chapter (and discussed following a consideration of the DoW). The response to this variability and to ensure certain curricular content is covered has been the development of *Educational Standards* for core subjects by the *Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs* (which consists of the political representatives for education and cultural affairs of each of the 16 federal states), in collaboration with professionals and subject specialists. An example of another system with variability in state curricula, and where there has been an effort to implement common standards is the United States. The US chapter cites the example of revisions made to the Common Core standards (CSS) by states that have emphasised some standards and, consequently, some DoW. As in Germany, in the United States there is no federally mandated curriculum. States have autonomy to articulate their own standards but federal funds have been used to steer state-level policy. Hence, the US chapter describes considerable variation across five US states.

Several chapters highlight *broad educational traditions or philosophical leanings that influence their curricula*. This includes the idea that writing is a potential site of intellectual, moral and civic development. There are two notions that encapsulate the underlying shared Nordic ideals in relation to this view of writing. One relates to the new textual society—a translation of the Nordic term for vast changes in mass literacy whereby working life, education and everyday life have become dependent on the written word to an unprecedented degree; an idea that has markedly influenced the framing of literacy, and particularly writing, in curricula in Norway, Denmark (and Sweden). The other concerns *Bildung*, whereby notions of competence and of *Bildung* are seen as having parallel aims. Competence has entered the

educational discourse around more concrete curricula outcomes, emphasising student abilities to apply knowledge and skills in a wide range of situations and contexts beyond schooling. *Bildung*, explain the Danish chapter's authors, refers to the idea that education aims to allow students to "function as enlightened citizens in a democratic society;" to experience otherness through reading and writing, among other means, and to develop cultural values of general knowledge, democratic citizenship and freedom of spirit. The Scandinavian (or Nordic) model of education focuses on integrated development of skills and qualities that "allow one to behave morally, to create and to act, and to work together, and in harmony with nature." Curricula in New Zealand have traditionally emphasised a personal growth model of writing; this is less obvious in recent iterations. From quite a different perspective regarding tradition, the authors of the chapter on Germany note that the prevalence of the discourses of skills particularly but also genre could be attributed to the historical tradition whereby writing quality in Germany was equated with formal correctness and with context-appropriateness of text. And, as noted earlier, in England, literacy is a concern underpinned by ideological positions around English language and cultural heritage.

Theory and research appear to be used selectively to inform curriculum and other official documents and mandates. At times, such use is seen to be slight or even ill informed; the German authors note a misalignment with theory and international standards in terms of their documents as well as concluding that research has had a negligible influence on curricula and associated documents. England is an example where the chapter authors assert that there is "an ignorance of wider research in writing." There, a cognitive theory (cognitive load)—a simple view of writing—underpins curricula in writing and the assumption is that the basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation need to be mastered before high proficiency can be achieved or higher-level processes acquired. Such a curriculum and assessment focus emphasising skills, especially basic skills, is at variance with much current research that shows the teaching of higher-level processes involved in written communication such as planning notably enhances motivation for a complex and demanding task like writing and can also help the development of basic skills as the same premises hold regarding easing cognitive load. By contrast, Norwegians appear to draw on several theoretical strands and on research. In Norway, the curricula framework contains four areas in relation to writing (planning and revising; producing; communicating and reflecting and assessing), suggestive of cognitive process underpinnings. There is also evidence in Norway of drawing on systemic functional linguistics with its focus on features of text that characterise particular functions of writing or genres. There is considerable research in Norway, where a large national research project, the NORMS project, sought to investigate "hidden" writing norms among teachers and explicated those norms in the form of cross-curricula

objectives. However, the influence on curriculum of this project and of other large-scale projects like the WRITE project which explored what made for good writing instruction and has been referred to by government agencies, and that of smaller research projects, is unclear. The authors of the chapter on Norway do note that there is no “policy level definition of the construct of writing competence” and that research is needed to analyse teachers’ “interpretational work.”

An integrated approach to the different modes of communication (speaking, writing and reading) is implied where the assessment standards are framed by two (reading and writing) or three (reading, writing and speaking) modes. For example, in Chile, the theoretical approach of the CLT is emphasised in official documents, and communicative competence is articulated as a triaxial structure focusing on reading, writing and oracy. As noted earlier, the Uzbek system also emphasises CLT approaches to writing but only for L3 English education. Similarly, in the United States, the Common Core standards explicitly emphasise an integrated approach to literacy that is reflected in some state standards that were analysed in the US chapter, such as the “integrated model of language development” in Texas. In Hong Kong, students learn the “integrated use” of three modes in English. However, *even when integration is a goal for literacy standards, reading is often given more emphasis than writing*, as is the case, for example, in Germany, Chile and Hong Kong. The Hong Kong chapter notes that “writing is included as the second most important English language skill behind reading.” While reading has been assessed in many school systems since at least the 1980s, large-scale writing exams are a relatively new feature of literacy assessments worldwide. In Chile, for example, reading has been evaluated since 1988 and writing exams have been in place only since 2013. In Uzbekistan, the only available information regarding literacy achievement comes from a fourth-grade assessment against international reading standards and it is not clear if writing will be included in the country’s upcoming assessment programme.

The discourses of writing reflected in curricula and official documents

Before employing our theoretical lens (DoW) and examining what it suggests with respect to cross-national patterns in the discourse surrounding writing, mention should be made of the fact that writing as a subject is not positioned in the same way across countries. *In most countries, the description of writing within curricula is confined to the L1 subject.* Uzbekistan is an interesting exception with writing explicitly emphasised with proficiency standards for L1, L2 and L3 and, although the author of the chapter on Hong Kong focused on English, secondary schools there also have other languages as the main medium of instruction. Norway has subject syllabi that include descriptions of what it means to write in that subject, although the Norwegian Language

Arts subject has, formally, a key responsibility to deliver writing instruction and is the only subject with objectives that target writing. In Denmark, writing is contained within the subject Danish, although some aspects related to teaching writing are also found in other subjects like physics, chemistry and English. How it is represented in the L1 subject varies and writing often takes a lesser role relative to reading. In England, for example, writing is one part of the primary English curriculum and, in the Programme of Study for Key Stage 1, is encompassed by only one of the seven overarching aims. In the United States, federal education law requires states to test achievement only in reading and math, and writing items are typically included as part of reading or English language arts exams. In Germany, writing is one of four domains within German as a subject.

Writing may be positioned differently in a country's curricula and standards. In New Zealand, while writing is described within the curriculum area English, and is not mentioned in the curricula of any other learning area, the *National Standards for Writing* (2012–2018) were devised from an analysis of what is required in writing to engage with, and be successful in, all subject areas of the curriculum. Likewise, the norms from research in Norway yielded cross-curricula criteria for writing standards. In the case of the US Common Core, the writing standards are found in both English language arts standards for primary and secondary school, and in literacy standards at the secondary level for science, social studies, and technical subjects and these are specified in a discipline-specific way. We consider this approach as aligning more readily with contemporary views of writing as discipline specific but devising such standards could be problematic given the limited research on discipline-specific writing.

The DoW framing was applied to the curricula and major associated documents to varying degrees, given the extent of the systematic nature of the analysis by the authors of each chapter. In some cases, as we have noted, the DoW framework served more as an overlay, post-hoc, to view the inductive analysis generated. So, our observations here are tentative. Further, the international nature of our cases surfaced the anglophone origins of the DoW, while analyses from jurisdictions with very recent curricula emphasised that the DoW reflects the period in which it was conceived. Table 11.1 below is an effort to show within and across country emphases by inferring the emphasis of discourses within a country. As previously noted, emphases within the curriculum of a country, may vary with age levels. And, as also noted, in countries like Germany and the United States there are different curricula by state. So, what is represented here is a generalisation, an oversimplification, and needs to be viewed in relation to the more detailed material in the respective case study chapters.

Overall, the emphases in the curricula discourse are on skills, genre and process. It should be noted that it appears that definitions of genre vary. Few seem to encapsulate the idea of genre as social process (after Kress, 1993) in terms

Table 11.1 Emphasis on discourses of writing across countries

<i>Discourse</i>	<i>Considerable emphasis</i>	<i>Some emphasis</i>	<i>Little or no emphasis</i>
Skills	England Germany Hong Kong Norway The United States	Chile Denmark New Zealand Uzbekistan	
Creativity	Denmark Norway	England Germany Hong Kong New Zealand	Chile The United States Uzbekistan
Process	Chile Denmark England Norway Uzbekistan	Germany New Zealand	
Genre	Chile Denmark Germany New Zealand Norway Uzbekistan	England Hong Kong	
Social Practices	New Zealand	Chile Norway	Denmark England Germany Hong Kong Uzbekistan
Sociopolitical		The United States	Chile England Germany Hong Kong New Zealand Norway Uzbekistan

Note: It was sometimes not possible to infer the strength of the emphasis, so countries are missing from some discourses.

of what texts do and how they do it to accomplish social aims. Both New Zealand and Norway, for example, appear to be closer to this definition while many curricula seem to portray genre as a text form. The latter is notable in the Hong Kong curriculum, where processes and skills dominate in primary school-related documents while process and genre are foremost discourses in secondary, but the actual examples of genre are more akin to text forms like posters or emails. In Uzbekistan, genre, the fact that students should learn to write within some genres, is dominant in curricula, followed by process. However, examination of the standards suggests that genre examples refer primarily to text forms. And, in terms of the standards (and textbooks) for

L1, these focus on a skills discourse; for L2, the emphasis is on correct spelling. A skills discourse, where grammar and spelling are most often referred to is seen as predominant in the curricula for the primary years in England although the writing process is also strongly represented. However, the authors note that the statements for composition, although structured around plan, draft, revise statements, do not always relate to these processes. For example, the composition standards for students' planning are elaborated as "discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar" as well as "discussing and recording ideas."

While Germany notes a focus on reading in national assessments, in the *Educational Standards and Curricula* for German, however, there are four competence domains (1. speaking and listening; 2. writing; 3. reading and dealing with texts and media; and 4. examining language and its use) and the foci of the writing domain are skills, genre and, to a lesser extent, process, generalising across federal states. The conclusion of the authors of the US chapter is that attention to each of the discourses varies by state but the strongest commonality is attention to skills, process and genre. In a minority of countries, the analysis suggests a relatively balanced emphasis in references across the different discourses. For example, the authors of the Denmark chapter consider that this describes discourse emphases in their writing curriculum. And, in Norway, the authors conclude that the curriculum represents writing as a multi-faceted phenomenon; it encompasses most of the discourses but with emphasis on skills, creativity, process and genre. New Zealand's primary school curriculum and associated documents is also more balanced in emphasis with respect to references to discourses.

There is *little mention of a social practices discourse* for most countries. In some, like Germany and in England's primary curriculum, there is a lamented absence of mention of creativity, and there was *little or no mention of a socio-political discourse* across cases where the DoW was employed by authors as a systematic tool for analysis. The constructs within these discourses are, arguably, complex and difficult to operationalise in standards. However, something akin to sociopolitical discourses about writing seem to be included in the multi-cultural and multi-lingual discourse in states like California and New York, two of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse states in the United States. California's writing standards view "the non-standard dialects of English that linguistically and culturally diverse students may bring to school from their homes and communities as valuable assets, resources in their own right, and solid foundations to be built upon for developing academic English." The chapter authors note that recognising and valuing non-standard language varieties could promote discussions regarding power and identity. That is, multi-cultural and multi-lingual issues could instantiate sociopolitical DoW.

In general, there is a pattern of there being different weights/proportions in terms of these discourses at different school levels. There may be a shift away from narrative-centred creativity in writing and a focus on developing ideas to more transactional functions like argumentation, reporting and source-based writing as students move through the grade levels. For example, the Chilean curriculum reveals a conception of language that goes from the linguistic substance of texts to their communicative intent. The text characteristics in the later years of schooling in Chile focus more on communicative purpose and the audience, and how the linguistic and non-linguistic resources are shaped by the context in which they are used, a more social discourse. The US Common Core-based standards reveal a move from narrative writing and texts based on personal experience to writing from text/source-based information and persuasive texts. The United States and Chilean standards explicitly mention the same text types (i.e., narrative, explanatory and persuasive texts), and the same progression is observed: informative and persuasive texts increase their appearance throughout the school grades. In Chile, it is noted that idea development, voice and text structure are absent in 11th and 12th grades. In Hong Kong the curriculum, analysis suggests an emphasis on process and skills in primary and process and genre in secondary. This suggests acceptance of an idea that there are basic, foundational skills that need to be emphasised in the early years. And, there are examples where the emphases in the curriculum document, the standards or assessment and the official resources are different. In Uzbekistan, there is acknowledgement in some textbooks of topics and activities that imply a social practices discourse by engaging students in peer review and writing about topics meant to engage them with social and personally relevant issues, particularly in the English L3 writing curriculum.

There are some that could be considered loosely as discourses of writing, that are not necessarily captured in the DoW but which the authors comment on. Perhaps, most significant is a discourse that views writing as a contributor to development. As noted above, the Nordic model of education focuses on integrating the development of skills and qualities that “allow one to behave morally, to create and to act, and to work together, and in harmony with nature” (see Norwegian and Danish chapters). A different view of development is seen in the case of Uzbekistan where it is linked to ongoing socioeconomic reforms; they write in their curriculum of applying advanced science and modern information and communication technologies to “educate spiritually mature and intellectually developed individuals.”

It is difficult to classify notions of voice or of self-expression in the DoW; however, it could be argued that creativity encompasses voice and self-expression. Although across countries, there is a low or non-existent mention of writer’s voice or the idea that writing is a means of self-expression, in official documents, its absence is remarked upon by chapter authors. The Chilean authors note with concern this lack in the official

discourse in their country, suggesting a disregard for writing as a means of self-expression. A sense of agency or voice and non-skills-based goals like cultivating joy (included in the standards in Denmark) are not represented in the DoW framework. In the case of Hong Kong, where the writing curriculum does include a creativity discourse, the chapter author expresses concern over a lack of instructional focus on using writing to foster creativity and attributes this partly to testing washback effects. Motivational aspects seem to be largely absent from most prescribed curricula. A form of slippage, perhaps a case of between and betwixt, complicates these analyses of curricula and associated documents and is illustrated specifically in the Norwegian chapter. The authors note that, in their curriculum, the Purposes <of Writing> chapter focusses on attitudes towards writing, mentioning self-efficacy and motivation as key areas (also self-assessment and self-reflection are included), but that these are left out when describing writing as a key competency.

A discourse of writing that alludes to either its criticality (this could, in part, be encompassed within the sociopolitical in terms of a critical discourse approach), or multi-modality is absent from Ivanič's (2004) original framework. Increasingly curricula in writing refer to these dimensions. For example, Hong Kong talks of teaching and learning activities to facilitate the development of critical thinking and the Danish, Chilean, German, the United States, Uzbek and Hong Kong chapters note elements of multi-modality or modes in written communication in the discourse in their official documents. Finally, what could be seen as another discourse (the big "D" discourse of James Gee) is seen in the analysis of the German curricula which identifies discourses associated with a discourse community like academic or vocational writing. This seems not to be referring to a discourse of "writing to learn," a recent addition to the DoW (Ivanič, 2017), but rather to encompass more the idea of a discourse of writing as community, another idea absent from the DoW framework.

Classroom practice and the relationship between practice and official discourse

There are two themes with respect to the relationship of official discourse to practice. The first concerns the fact that some curricula do not reflect contemporary research in writing. The second area, which is the predominant one, is where there is a lack of alignment between what the curriculum espouses, and what happens in classrooms. Regarding the latter, we do note, however, that the *research base about classroom practice in writing has been found to be surprisingly thin in some of the case studies*. Uzbekistan has literally no research on classroom practice in writing or in writing assessment. Germany has no indicators of teacher content-related or pedagogical knowledge of writing nor studies of teachers' classroom practice in writing; what studies there are

have focused on teaching subskills like orthography or vocabulary. Norway notes no large-scale empirical studies of writing instruction across subjects.

Before we examine the relationship between curricula and practice, we address any patterns that arise from a consideration of the research that is presented in the cases with respect to classroom practice in writing. One theme, which is echoed in international literature, concerns the *relatively limited emphasis on students composing of text and the limited nature of instruction in writing in some countries*. In Germany, for example, efforts to promote literacy skills have led to a focus on reading and orthography, effectively narrowing the curricula in an effort, presumably, to gain traction in raising achievement in a specific area. In Hong Kong, writing in English is found to be focused on error reduction. In Chile, most writing is reproductive, characterised by copying from the blackboard, dictations and short answers to questions. In countries like England, testing has led to teaching that, in effect, narrows the curriculum experience of writing, diminishes the place of creative expression and generally leads to an impoverished view of writing. This has happened through, for example, teaching students formulaic structures for paragraphing or how to put particular grammatical structures into their texts.

Curricula, in many of the countries in our case studies, are not informed by theory and research or by contemporary views about the nature of writing and pedagogies to teach writing, as noted in the initial section, which considered influences that shape curricula. There are multiple instances noted. The authors of the chapter on England cite research that leads them to conclude, “There is a very evident misalignment between the construct of writing in the curriculum, and the evidence-based insights into the teaching of writing.” Regarding the Common Core standards, the authors of the US chapter note, quoting Applebee (2013, p. 28), the “lack of a substantive research base for the sequencing of language skills across the grades.” With respect to the former lack, there is a considerable research base on effective practices in writing. With regard to development in language skills, while no comprehensive theory of writing development exists, there is a wealth of material on, for example, linguistic development in writing including lexical and syntactic development and the development of coherence and cohesion in writing. The issue, as we see it, is that considerable knowledge and skill are needed to synthesise the research studies and apply the findings to the design of curriculum or standards documents and accompanying resource materials.

In several chapters, there were instances that suggest a *discrepancy between espoused and enacted curricula*. The Danish authors describe a very real tension noting, “we find a striking discrepancy between prescribed and enacted curricula, in which classroom and examination practices position students ambiguously between joyful writing and high-stakes assessment.” One pattern noted is that the curricula may contain reference to more recent and empirically supported theories and pedagogies for writing development, especially with respect to process or genre discourses, but research on the

enacted curriculum shows that teaching practices often do not align with that curriculum, tending to be more form and grammar focused. The author of the chapter on Hong Kong drew attention to this discrepancy, stating,

Although process and genre approaches to writing have been promoted in Hong Kong schools both through the various versions of the curriculum guides and professional development workshops ..., they have not been widely adopted by the majority of the teachers.

Likewise, research portrays teaching practice in Chilean classrooms as adopting a mechanistic approach, disconnected from the preferences of students (Gómez et al., 2016), and in contrast to a curriculum which stresses a communicative language approach.

At times, the gap between what the curricula states about practice and actual practice in classrooms may be explained by a mismatch in understandings of, and positions regarding, writing. The national *Educational Standards* and *Curricula* in Germany are seen to be not only “misaligned with international discourses on writing” but also “out of step with the values and beliefs of scholars of writing and teaching writing in German-speaking countries.” Or, the mismatch may be a result of different documents containing different messages. In an effort to shape, or in some cases support, practice, education ministries or equivalent often provide resources related to curricula and assessment standards in writing. In the case of Uzbekistan, the curriculum and the resources to enable its enactment were produced in quite different philosophical climates. The categories from the writing assignments in the textbooks reveal some misalignment in terms of emphasis compared to the standards with the texts, for example, containing assignments not connected to the standards. The authors conclude that, in Uzbekistan, “there is more misalignment than alignment between the standards and the presumed curricula as expressed in textbook tasks.” There is also the curious situation in Uzbekistan of another misalignment whereby native languages are taught using skill-focused instruction while foreign languages rely on communicative or competency approaches.

Another possible explanation for the gap between the espoused or prescribed curricula and the implementation was noted above in the discussion of high-stakes assessment and the tendency to teach what is examined; the gap is especially noticeable where assessment is confined to a narrow view of writing. A further possibility to explain the curriculum-practice discrepancy is the lack of teacher knowledge, often attributed to their preparation, both pre-service and in-service. New Zealand teachers report little pre-service preparation to teach writing, relative to that given to reading and, while many engage in learning about writing instruction in professional development activities, these can be of variable quality. The authors of the chapter on Norway cite research that suggests that the curriculum has “received little

attention from teachers in their daily work” and attribute this to the fact that the competencies were not fully understood by teachers who were expected overnight to become teachers of writing. The authors of the Norway chapter suggest that, where teachers lack knowledge, they may turn to other official documents like the standards, for example, pointing out that a concentration on Standards or Purpose presents a less expansive view of writing. And, within the standards they note, as do other authors like those authoring the US chapter, that teachers may select those that appear to be more explicit or clear with respect to teaching content.

Conclusions

A consideration of these nine cases, representing reasonably diverse educational systems, illustrates this chapter’s title that the countries we showcase are similar, but different. There is a sense that writing achievement is less than satisfactory although the empirical basis for this judgement by governments and constituencies is not always clear. Several chapters mention external factors like results on international tests (of reading) contributing as a catalyst for politically driven reform of curricula and assessments. This reform has witnessed, across many of our case study countries, a drive towards more mandated and standardised assessments, although writing is not always represented in these or is represented in a narrow form, perhaps a sign of the complexity of designing valid assessments and standards for writing. While instances of political influences on writing discourse/curricula are discussed, also illustrated are instances of traditions or philosophical notions regarding education, impacting how writing is viewed and taught.

The positioning of writing in the curriculum, in almost all cases, is within the curriculum for the L1 subject; in a few instances, writing is mentioned in the curricula of other subjects, we hope as an acknowledgement that writing is not a generic skill and requires the mastery of different discourses across subject areas. The prevalent DoW in the curricula and associated assessments across countries show some similarities with patterns, emphasising process, genre and skills. A balanced discourse is evident in a minority of cases. In terms of prescriptiveness of curriculum, there appears to be a continuum, with a small number of countries experiencing considerable autonomy in interpreting and implementing curricula, to those having some flexibility in interpreting, to countries where a curriculum is largely mandated. Interestingly, there is very little evidence of instances where pedagogy in terms of writing instruction is prescribed, other than the specification of an approach like the CLT or the description of teaching as a process of inquiry. Several cases noted a lack of alignment between theory and research in writing and the country’s curriculum and assessment; or a lack of consistency within a country’s curriculum, or a misalignment between curriculum and assessment and/or standards, or between the curriculum and its implementation.

This suggests confusion about the construct of writing, about how best to assess it and to prepare teachers to teach it effectively. Regarding teaching, there was a surprising lack of research noted by a number of countries with respect to generating data on teacher knowledge and classroom practice. It seems that within all of our case study countries, to varying extents, officialdom and often the profession struggle to conceptualise and then operationalise, in terms of curricula, assessment and pedagogy, writing as a cognitively complex, social act that involves many contextual demands.

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