

International Perspectives on Writing Curricula and Development

A Cross-Case Comparison

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Chapter 1

A framework for comparing writing curricula cross-nationally

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We begin this chapter by reviewing theoretical perspectives with respect to writing development that might conceivably inform curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, before we consider the sources of information that practitioners use to ascertain writing performance and development and to guide pedagogical decisions. These sources of information, which form the basis for the curricular content analyses presented in this volume's nine case studies, reflect the values and beliefs about writing and learning to write that shape teachers' work in schools around the world. Next, to provide a rationale for comparing writing curricula internationally, we discuss the importance of comparative analyses that highlight varying responses to common challenges in the design of educational policies. We explain how cross-case comparisons can illuminate a range of possible approaches that writing curriculum designers, teachers and researchers adopt, and how examining these in cross-national perspective can provide fresh insights into their work in local settings. We then present this volume's framework for analysing writing curricula within and across cases, one that balances the need to represent each school system's unique circumstances with the need to facilitate cross-case comparison through a set of common concepts.

Theories of writing development

An understanding of how writing develops is vital to optimising its development. But, as noted recently by Bazerman et al. (2017), the knowledge we have is fragmented, with little in the way of an integrated picture of writing development as a multi-dimensional process. The term writing development has been used variably, according to Applebee (2000), to refer to the course of normal development of learning to write or to refer to the refinement of strategic processes and knowledge involved in writing or to describe increasing linguistic sophistication of the written text. Similarly, evidence of a bifurcation (as opposed to multi-dimensionality) of perspectives is seen in the statement of Alamargot and Fayol (2009) that a model of learning that specifies the development of both product and processes in writing does not exist

and also in the suggestion of Graham et al. (2013) that perspectives of development in writing can be seen to focus largely on cognitive or contextual factors. To some researchers of writing and writing development, the divided theoretical lines are tantamount to “fissures” that inhibit critical dialogue (Glasswell & Kamberelis, 2011, p. 320).

Within the different perspectives, writing research has produced models, for example of the cognitive processes involved in writing (e.g., Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Berninger & Swanson, 1994; Hayes, 1996; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Kellog, 1996) and these have, as this volume’s case studies suggest, been relatively influential in the design of writing curricula. The approach to teaching writing termed *process writing*, drew on the notion that development involved practising the craft by engaging in the processes involved in writing. Drawing on cognitive models, researchers have proposed that ideation, the higher-order skill of composing and writing meaningful texts, depends on the mastery of lower-order skills like transcription and spelling (e.g., Juel et al., 1985). Following from this view of early writing development (Juel, 1988), Berninger and Swanson (1994) described the processes involved in transcription, while other researchers investigated the fluency of language skills (McCutchen, 2011), and phonological and orthographic coding and fine motor skill (Alamargot & Fayol, 2009). However, most such cognitive models have considered differences between skilled and less-skilled writers or factors that predict skilled writing and very few have shown how changes occur (Harmey & Wilkinson, 2019).

There are researchers of writing development who focus on how meaning is conveyed in writing, particularly how various indicators of linguistic complexity change and reflect development (e.g., Myhill, 2008; Rowe, 2009). And, finally, a group of scholars view writing development in terms of ‘a transaction among individual learners, their many contexts and the sign-symbol system’ (Schultz & Fecho, 2000, p. 55). Writing is viewed as a social event; writers acquire social practices and development is seen in their changing use of these over time (Beach et al., 2016). How students are supported to acquire these practices is influenced by curriculum and instruction (Rowe, 2018). For example, Dyson (1983) has shown how instructional practices shape how children use the semiotic tools available to represent language while other researchers consider how social interactions in classrooms promote or constrain writing development (e.g., Glasswell, 1999; Jesson & Rosedale, 2016; Jeffery & Wilcox, 2016). Yet other researchers (e.g., Kostouli, 2009) are concerned with the context or community within which writing takes place and how participation by developing writers in that community shapes development.

Curriculum designers must grapple with this lack of comprehensive, multi-dimensional model of development or coherent body of scholarship that defines the ‘subject’ of writing when representing how writing development progresses (or should progress), designing curricula that align with those

progressions, and developing appropriate measures of writing performance. We argue that criteria that are chosen to define curricula expectations, to measure performance, and to signify progress encapsulate often-implicit ideas of what is valued in writing as well as the underpinning explanations for development that are held. Thus, the nature of the criteria in curricula, standards, assessments and progressions warrants a close examination as indicators of what is desirable and valued in writing. And, as Evensen and colleagues (2016) assert, these criteria have ‘such educational importance that even their origins, intellectual trajectories and underpinnings should be given attention’ (p. 1). Examining the origins and the intellectual and theoretical underpinnings of such criteria is the central aim of this book.

Sources of information regarding writing performance and development

Comparing sources of information regarding theories of writing development, criteria for writing competence, recommended instructional practices and research discourses implicated in writing curricula across school systems is a complex task due to varied approaches policymakers take to representing curricular guidelines. Information regarding desired outcomes for writing in compulsory schooling may come from several sources, including 1) curriculum goals, 2) standards or benchmarks that explicate these goals and 3) progressions or writing assessment tools. Both standards and curriculum-referenced writing assessment tools, which have criteria pertaining to levels, may possess characteristics of developmental progressions that provide information about what students should know and be able to do with writing at different levels of education, and thus might be used to inform sequential instructional planning. Developmental progressions, whether conveyed through curricular standards or assessment aims, are based in ‘the notion of a vertical continuum of increasing expertise’, whereby ‘knowledge, understandings, ways of thinking or reasoning, concepts and skills are interconnected and connected across time’ (Parr, 2011, p. 35).

Descriptions in curricula, learning progressions, standards and forms of writing assessment differ with respect to whether what they describe represents aspiration (i.e., ‘what should be’) or reality (i.e., ‘what is or has been’) (Gong, 2008). Examples of aspirational progressions include curricular materials that convey specific sequences of learning experiences or of student understanding that are based in a particular understanding of writing development (e.g., derived from writing theory and/or research), which is often implicit. Yet there are also learning progressions that describe reality, the actual development of student performance and understanding such as might be obtained from large normative samples of student writing or from systematically obtained professional judgement (e.g., in Norway, the NORM project, and in New Zealand, the aTTle norms). Descriptions of

how writing develops or ought to develop also vary in the extent to which they present ‘a map of possibilities’ (Gong, 2008, p. 4), as opposed to a hypothetical normative pathway; varying in the extent to which they allow for divergences among students. And, descriptions of development vary in the level of detail or ‘grain size’ but generally progressions are seen to describe more incremental growth than standards and to be based on research about how learning actually develops (Bailey & Heritage, 2014; Corcoran et al., 2009).

In formulating descriptions of development aimed to benefit student learning, the creation often involves combinations of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches (Heritage, 2008). Top-down approaches tend to align with aspirational progressions, which represent understandings of writing development that may be informed by some expert knowledge regarding writing. However, as noted above, research currently is only able to provide limited information for writing, particularly about development. Thus, learning progressions might be expected to rely on notional understandings of writing development with an inconsistent basis in writing theory and research. For example, the most recent reform initiative in the United States, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (see Chapter 5), demonstrates how top-down approaches might sideline expert knowledge. Although the CCSS documents describe a process informed by ‘research and input from numerous sources, including educators from kindergarten through college, state departments of education, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, parents and students, and members of the public’ (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019), literacy scholars have disputed this account. For example, Zancanella and Moore (2014), in their investigation of the emergence of the CCSS, found that teachers and educational researchers had little input into the final literacy curriculum and that the group who ultimately wrote the standards ‘tilts strongly toward the assessment industry’ (Zancanella & Moore, 2014, p. 277). Their analysis suggests that political concerns influenced the formulation of key CCSS design features, and, as noted by Applebee and Langer (2013), CCSS writing progressions are lacking a basis in any coherent theory of writing development.

Bottom-up approaches tend to align with ‘what is or has been’ approaches to the articulation of learning progressions, and these typically involve collaboration among teachers, curriculum experts and literacy researchers in developing descriptions of learning trajectories that are based in experience working with students at varying grade levels, resulting in broad and non-prescriptive curricula (e.g., in New Zealand, the Literacy Learning Progressions). This can involve conversations among teachers and researchers regarding samples of student writing to arrive at descriptions of what students are actually producing at different levels of development. The resulting progressions are then subject to review by wider samples of writing teachers who provide more detailed description regarding the linkages among points

on the progressions, thus building localised theories of writing development from the ground up. Many current learning progressions, unlike most other curriculum documents and assessments, notably account for how advanced understandings are reached, including through what teaching tactics, and it is argued progressions that are built in a bottom-up manner are more likely to achieve coherence among learning theory, curriculum, instruction, assessment and teacher learning (Shepard, 2018; Shepard et al., 2017). In practice, curriculum design involves a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes, with one approach tending to dominate, as the case studies presented in this volume suggest.

Although the challenge of translating sources of information into instructional plans might be lessened when standards and progressions are informed by teachers' professional knowledge, teachers of writing are in either case faced with the task of aligning their work with the curriculum requirements represented in official documents. Even where curricular guidelines and allied documents are derived in a 'bottom-up' manner and are thus more closely aligned with teacher knowledge, unofficial or suggested curricular materials, including low-stakes, formative assessments, still retain a top-down aspect as they do steer teachers' decisions regarding what, when and how to teach writing. Curricular guidelines convey representations of writing competence that shape teachers' day-to-day planning regarding such crucial aspects of the teaching of writing as what genres should be the focus of instruction and at what points in students' development. Content analyses of these curricular documents thus provide insight into teachers' and students' experiences with writing in school and the underlying values that shape those experiences. Each of the nine cases presented in this volume undertakes an analysis of curricular sources of information that represent the writing curriculum for a particular school system and presents a reflection on how these sources are, or might be, translated into practice. Where classroom-based research is available, each case study examines what is known from empirical research about the teaching and learning of writing in that context and how curricula shape instruction.

A cross-system perspective on writing curricula

We argue that, while the analysis of curricular content within school systems is an important task for understanding representations of writing competence that strongly influence students' writing development, it is also necessary to study variation across school systems. Comparative curricular analyses have the advantage of bringing to light larger policy-setting trends and common problems in policy implementation, with the overarching goals of generating new theories and more effective approaches to curriculum design and research. A comparative analysis of curricular documents produced by government agencies and their proxies can help stakeholders such as writing researchers and curriculum designers gain insight into potential strengths and weakness

inherent in varying policy approaches. On a very practical level, systematic cross-case policy comparison ‘allows policy-makers faced with novel problems to draw lessons from the experiences of other jurisdictions’ (Vogel & Henstra, 2015). Thus, in Chapter 11, we examine this volume’s nine cases in cross-national perspective with a cross-case comparison. We propose that by comparing curricular content, as well as the histories, processes, theories, research and teaching practices associated with these, writing educators and researchers can better reflect on the values and assumptions that underpin curricula within their unique educational contexts in light of a broader spectrum of approaches.

Though each education system is unique in terms of its sociohistoric development, all systems face common dilemmas regarding, for example, who decides which policy goals to pursue, what resources will be devoted to policy goals, and how these resources will be distributed (Vogel & Henstra, 2015). Variation in how education systems define goals is an important focus of critical analysis because it can surface a range of possible framings and associated pitfalls. Problems in curricular design and implementation might include, for example, tensions between the degree of specificity with which the curriculum is articulated and the extent to which teacher agency and autonomy is prioritised in carrying it out; tensions between school accountability and individual development; the politicisation of literacy curricula; and nationwide anxiety about performance on international literacy measures. The contextualised analyses presented in this volume’s nine case studies provide a wide-angle lens viewpoint—amplified through cross-national comparison—regarding the varying geopolitical influences that frame policy, including debates regarding how instructional aims are defined, how their progress is evaluated and how they are advanced formally through educational policies pertaining to, among other domains, teacher education and school accountability.

With respect to writing, comparative curricula analysis can describe varying responses to common challenges school systems face such as the challenge of identifying institutional responsibilities for supporting students’ writing development; funding constraints to implementing high-quality writing curricula; and the difficulty of designing valid measures of writing competence that are aligned with current theory and research. Writing curricula could be expected to vary in the amount and type of emphasis that is placed on writing, where writing is located in the curriculum, as well as how writing competence and its development are conceptualised. A systematic comparison of writing cultures across the globe is in part facilitated by the rising prominence, for good or ill, of outcomes-based education policies worldwide that require finer-grained articulations of writing competence—of what students should know and be able to do with writing at progressing stages in their education. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Study of Written Composition, conducted in the 1980s, pointed to an absence of explicit curricular frameworks for writing at that time (Saari & Purves, 1992). However, as is clear from the

nine case studies included in this volume, over the past 30 years educational systems across the globe have sought to raise student achievement by developing curricular guidelines that are variously referred to as standards, outcomes or objectives (CEDEFOP, 2013; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002); Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Though reading competence was initially the main literacy focus and remains dominant, writing continues to garner more attention and, in recent years, literacy and language arts standards and school subject standards (e.g., for history and science) are more likely to specify writing outcomes. These writing curricular frameworks present variable conceptions of what it means to write well that strongly influence students' opportunities for writing development in schools (Applebee, 2000).

As this discussion of common challenges, inevitable variation and case uniqueness suggests, our goal in this volume is not to evaluate school systems based on any predetermined set of criteria, but to describe variation that will necessarily occur when writing curricula are developed in differing historical, cultural and geopolitical environments, including varying reform trajectories and research traditions. Hence, rather than organising case studies thematically or according to any particular continuum of features, the case study chapters in this volume are presented in order of latitude measurements, beginning with New Zealand and ending with Norway. Figure 1.1 represents the geographic span of the nine cases.



Figure 1.1 Geographic span of the nine case studies

What we know about cross-cultural variation in writing curricula

Cross-cultural analyses of writing cultures are scarce. However, some previous work has employed ethnographic methods, particularly analyses of interview and student writing sample data, with varying emphases on policy. Xiao-Ming (1996), for example, focused on cross-national variation in secondary teachers' perspectives on what constitutes 'good writing' in two education systems. Comparing teachers' (two in the United States and two in China) perspectives through a series of interviews in which they reflected on student writing samples, Xiao-Ming noted similarities in teachers' focus on student intentionality and purposes for writing. The study also pointed to differences in the cultural knowledge and values, particularly as regards literary theory, that teachers brought to the task of assessing writing. One overarching conclusion was that 'teachers' criteria for 'good writing' is a cultivated sensitivity, an acquired taste,' and, for students, learning to produce it is 'a process of acculturation' (p. 127) that is achieved in part through their experiences with teacher feedback. This volume explores how implicit values regarding writing might relate to the broader geopolitical context of variation in policies, standards and their historical development.

Other work examining cross-national variation has emphasised students' experiences in tertiary education. Adopting a similar approach to the one we apply in this volume, Foster and Russell (2002) included chapters written by researchers working within different national contexts, as they compared challenges students face across six systems (China, England, France, Germany, Kenya and South Africa) when transitioning from secondary to tertiary school writing. Discussions of policy in this project centre primarily on examination requirements for secondary school students seeking to enter universities. Touching on the difficulty of articulating a meta-language for describing cross-national variation (discussed further below), Foster and Russell (2002) note 'it's tempting to concede that writing is too deeply situated within each educational culture to make any sensible comparisons possible, and leave it at that' (p. 319). Resisting this temptation, they discuss variation in the obstacles that students face when transitioning from secondary school writing focussed on test preparation to the disciplinary writing that characterises tertiary-level writing. Foster and Russell conclude that while for French students this transition was relatively smooth, Chinese students were more likely to be disoriented by the need to assume the more subjective positioning required for university writing. One overarching conclusion is that the cultivation of authorial agency, and 'adaptive agency' (Foster & Russell, 2002, p. 325) in particular, is a key factor in students' development as writers, a finding that Foster (2006) further develops in a comparison of German and US university students' perspectives. This volume provides further insight into variation in writing exam cultures across national contexts.

The largest study to date on international variation, the IEA Study of Written Composition, examined policy, practice and performance across school systems using a variety of research methods, including survey, content analysis and ethnography. IES included data from 14 educational systems regarding policy, practice and achievement as measured by common writing assessments. Summary accounts of the study were published as a two-volume set (Gorman et al., 1988; Purves, 1992) and one report on writing curricula in the participating countries was also published (Saari, 1991). An overarching conclusion from the study was that it is not possible to compare students' writing performance internationally due to the impossibility of designing exams around a unified construct of writing competence. Cultural variation with regard to how students interpreted the exam's writing tasks, as well as how raters interpreted essay-scoring criteria, presented insurmountable challenges to the goals of measuring and comparing student writing across participating countries. Accordingly, Purves (1992) concluded that subsequent research must focus more on descriptive, rather than evaluative, international comparisons—a recommendation that we take up in this volume.

This volume's comparative analytic framework

A common approach to comparative policy analysis is content analysis (e.g., document analysis, discourse analysis and historical analysis) of information derived from multiple sources (Hoffman et al., 2012), which can include larger scale quantitative analyses (e.g., Bereczki, 2016). Policy content can be deductively analysed according to categories derived from relevant scholarship (e.g., Erichsen & Salajan, 2013), and some practitioners insist on analytic procedures that apply *a priori* categories as variables to be quantitatively analysed (Neuendorf, 2002). Content might also be deductively analysed according to general categories such as policy goals, targets and agents (Vogel & Henstra, 2015). However, inductive analyses or some combination of deductive and inductive approaches are also common (e.g., Stern, 1998) since *a priori* categories may be inadequate for capturing the uniqueness of individual cases. The approach taken in this volume is to apply combined inductive and deductive approaches, as we describe in further detail below.

In addition to policy content, comparative policy research also seeks to understand the processes underlying policy development. For example, Lewis and colleagues (2019) applied an 'assemblage' approach to content analysis of policy documents to understand how standards-based reform policies were developed and implemented in Australian and American education systems. This volume's analytic framework examines processes by providing contextualised representations of each case study school system that include, to varying degrees, information regarding policy development and shift. The case study authors take varied approaches regarding the types of contextual information

they provide, based on their judgements regarding which aspects of the school system's history and culture are most salient for understanding the description of the writing curriculum and the results of the content analysis.

Lessons about the obstacles inherent in comparative analyses can be drawn from a long history in sociological research. Kravchuk (2008) notes that 'the basic problem of comparative research is to access a "meta-language" that is capable of evaluating statements concerning the comparability of social phenomena across social systems' (p. 173). This problem is based in three interrelated pitfalls of comparative research: ahistoricity, comparability and reification, each of which centres on tensions between the uniqueness of a case's sociohistorical context, on one hand and, the need to identify common concepts that allow for comparison on the other hand. Given the 'spaciotemporal' nature of comparative research, there has been a tendency for researchers situated outside the focus context to apply concepts that are not attuned to local phenomena. In this volume, we navigate these pitfalls in three ways. First, regarding the issue of ahistoricity, each case includes a description of the case study context, as it is situated within a historical trajectory of educational policy development. Second, regarding the comparability problem, while we assume curricular comparisons are possible despite their inherent challenges, we acknowledge the challenges to applying a common theoretical framework that is developed in one sociocultural context to the analysis of curricular content developed in other contexts. Therefore, the case study authors applied the Discourses of Writing analytic framework, discussed in detail below, in flexible ways, adapting it according to their expert judgements and insider perspectives. Third, the potential for reification resulting from researcher insensitivity is minimised because each chapter contributor is situated within the case study context.

One means to examine values and associated theoretical underpinnings—to make explicit that which may not be articulated directly in curriculum, standards or assessment and other documents—is to examine them for evidence of the discourse or discourses they contain. Discourses are 'recognisable associations among values, beliefs and practices which lead to particular forms of situated action, to particular decisions' (Ivanič, 2004, p. 220). Ivanič (2004) developed a framework, called the Discourses of Writing (DoW), with the purpose of analysing policy and curriculum documents and pedagogical materials related to the teaching of writing. She argued that 'policy, practice and opinions about literacy education are usually underpinned, consciously or subconsciously, by particular ways of conceptualising writing, and by particular ways of conceptualising how writing can be learned' (p. 220), and that these are expressed as DoW. DoW are 'constellations of beliefs about writing, beliefs about learning to write, ways of talking about writing, and the sorts of approaches to teaching and assessment which are likely to be associated with these beliefs' (p. 224). The framework, which draws from an analysis of research on writing, incorporates a range of theoretical perspectives that are

likely to be represented in these documents and materials. This framework has been applied, for example, to a comparative analysis of large-scale writing exams across US states (Jeffery, 2009) and to a cross-national comparison of primary school writing curricula (Peterson et al., 2018).

The DoW framework is based in an understanding that the written text is always embedded within and connected to three domains: *cognitions*, *events* and *social contexts* (Ivanič, 2004). Based on this multi-layered understanding of writing, the DoW encompass seven categories to represent major writing cultures, ways of thinking about the purposes of writing and how it is created and represented: *Skills*, *Creativity*, *Process*, *Genre*, *Social Practices*, *Sociopolitical* (Ivanič, 2004) and *Thinking* (Ivanič, 2017). A *Skills* discourse, focusing on the textual aspects of writing, emphasises writing competence as a mastery of conventions that is learned through decontextualised, explicit instruction, tending to focus at an atomistic level on grammar, spelling and punctuation conventions. In practice, this often assumes a bottom-up model of development in which conventions must be learned before students can succeed with more complex writing tasks.

Creativity, *Thinking* and *Process* discourses focus on the *cognitive* aspects of writing in the embedded model. A *Creativity* discourse emphasises writing competence as an expression of the individual writer's creativity and learning to write is often framed as a discovery process in which students pursue their interests through writing. Teaching is implicit, as students are provided opportunities to write about topics of their choosing, and teachers cultivate the writer rather than directly teaching writing. The *Thinking* discourse, based in 'writing-to-learn' scholarship, emphasises theoretical understandings of writing as a tool for knowledge construction and for processing ideas and information. It is understood in relation to 'learning-to-write' approaches and teaching from this orientation would involve the use of writing to understand and reflect on curriculum content (e.g., historical concepts and mathematical understandings). A *Process* discourse emphasises writing competence as the mastery of the composing process, modelled on an understanding of expert writers' approaches to constructing texts through reiterative phases of invention, drafting, review and revision. Teaching involves explicit instruction in the phases using scaffolds such as brainstorming and peer-review protocols. Process discourses overlap with the *event* layer of the embedded model by emphasising the small-scale context of the writing classroom and the rhetorical aspects of the writing event such as determining a purpose for communication.

Genre and Social Practices discourses focus on the writing *event* aspect of the embedded model. A *Genre* discourse, which is based in Systemic Functional Linguistics understandings of language use in context, conceptualises mastery in terms of learning how to produce text features that are appropriate for the social purposes they serve for communication. Teaching often involves explicit modelling of text genres, discussions of how text features

relate to these social purposes and guided practice of composing in these genres. A *Social Practices* discourse is based in the notion that writing competence involves writing to achieve ‘real’ social purposes, and these are typically understood as writing to communicate with an audience beyond the classroom. Teachers engage students in identifying purposes for writing, such as to communicate with a local politician about an issue that concerns them. As such, teaching is both implicit and explicit, as students discuss purposes and functions of writing and teachers immerse students in writing experiences that are understood to be authentic (as opposed to only serving as academic writing tasks).

Finally, the *Sociopolitical* discourse is based in critical literacy theories, and it is the only discourse that Ivanič situates fully in the social context aspect in the embedded model. Writing competence involves understanding ‘why different types of writing are the way they are, and taking a position among alternatives’ (Ivanič, 2004, p. 225). Teaching is explicit, as students reflect on writing as an activity involving identity construction and critical reflection on sociopolitical power structures and one’s position within these. Previous content analyses of writing curricula have suggested that *Genre* and *Skills DoW* tend to dominate, intermingled with some attention to *Process* and *Creativity* and very little, if any, focus on *Sociopolitical* or *Social Practices* (e.g., Saari, 1991; Peterson et al., 2018), suggesting some misalignment between current theorising regarding writing development and the design of school writing curricula. Another aim of this volume, then, is to compare across education systems the implicit or explicit representation in writing curricula of theoretical understandings of writing development and their basis in empirical research.

The case studies presented in this volume (Chapters 2–10) form the basis of a comparative case study of writing curricula in nine school systems, presented in our conclusion (Chapter 11). To draw inferences regarding how curricula are translated into teaching, each case study also discusses, where available, research in instructional practice, which has thus far received scant attention with regard to writing. At the core of each chapter is an analysis of curricular guidelines (e.g., standards) that stipulate the content of the writing curriculum; and auxiliary documents produced by government agencies and entities operating with their explicit endorsement that shed light on the rationales and processes underlying their design and any sample teaching methods envisioned in their application. Taken together, these documents serve to operationalise the writing curriculum, or what is valued as knowledge and the trajectories through which that knowledge might be expected to develop. Following the approach used in a previous comparative analysis of writing cultures (Jeffery et al., 2018), each case study chapter first orients readers to the focus system’s historical, cultural and geopolitical environment as regards, for example, educational reform movements, large-scale assessment designs and writing research traditions. This orientation serves

to situate each case study sociohistorically and to provide insight into how curriculum structures might have evolved in response to unique combinations of factors within that educational context.

Writing researchers situated in each case study context then present findings from a descriptive content analysis of curriculum documents (i.e., curriculum guidelines and their proxies) in the focus educational system to address the question: What is to be developed, and how? To varying degrees, the case studies consider such questions as: 1) Where does the writing curriculum appear? 2) Are there any indications of views regarding within which subject area(s) of the curriculum writing should be taught? 2) How specific are objectives for and indicators of writing competence? 3) What, if any, teaching methods are indicated? 4) Is a theoretical positioning with respect to writing function, process and development stated or implied? The volume builds from two investigations, with which various contributors have been involved, regarding international variation in writing curricula. The first (Peterson et al., 2018) examined variation in primary school writing curricula in four countries (Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Sweden) by employing deductive analysis using categories derived from Ivanič's (2004, 2017) DoW framework. The second (Jeffery et al., 2018) involved an inductive analysis of developmental trajectories suggested in writing curricula in three countries (Denmark, Norway and the United States). Here, we combine the two approaches. Policy documents in each case study chapter were analysed using deductive and inductive coding procedures such that descriptive as well as inferential findings could be compared across chapters and discussed as a group in the cross-case analysis (Chapter 11).

Units of content analyses vary depending on the theoretical frameworks and questions that inform the study design and can focus on the word, sentence, paragraph or, theme level (Bowen & Bowen, 2008). For this volume's case studies, relevant curricular content was analysed at the level of statements concerning the writing curriculum categorized as: 1) identified outputs (i.e., learning outcomes such as cognitive processes, genre knowledge and skills); 2) identified inputs (e.g., sample teaching activities and curriculum materials); or 3) explanations (connecting curricular content to formal and informal theories of writing development). The writing researchers also presented inductive analyses across documents in order to draw inferences regarding the ways that writing development is conceptualized as well as the values that underpin the writing culture examined. Each case study chapter includes a discussion of how the curriculum has been enacted in schools, as implicated in available research emanating from that education system.

Chapter 11 presents a cross-case comparison and reflection on implications for writing policy development, teaching and research. Inductively, we provide a thematic comparative analysis of findings across the nine cases. Deductively, we analyse case study results referencing Ivanič's (2004, 2017) DoW framework. We then examine the ways in which writing development

is represented in the curricula, and the extent to which evidence-based practices, or a philosophy aligned with such, are represented, across the cases. The picture implicated in Chapter 11's cross-case comparison is one of competing interests between, for example, the need to gather reliable evidence of writing achievement and a desire for curricula that reflect more recent understandings of writing as a socioculturally situated, cognitively complex activity. Case study authors highlight, to varying degrees, issues associated with circuitous (sometimes contentious) policy trajectories, cultural traditions regarding human development, politicised views of educational goals, a desire for clearly articulated and measurable outcomes, a commitment to teacher autonomy and professional judgement, and the imperative for teachers to translate nuanced and/or complicated developmental progressions into instructional plans. By highlighting common conditions and challenges across cases to the design of effective writing curricula, we aim to inform future work of policymakers and writing curriculum designers and to provoke thought and debate about the policy–practice gap and how it could be addressed. This volume also aims, by describing gaps in research within and across cases, to inform the design of research that assumes an international perspective on the teaching and learning of writing and that draws from a variety of research traditions.

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