International Perspectives on Writing Curricula and Development

A Cross-Case Comparison

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Chapter 7

Underlying beliefs about writing and teaching writing in Germany: An analysis of policy documents for German in Year 9 at secondary school

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Introduction

Attaining adequate writing competencies is a prerequisite for educational success and plays a critical role for societal and cultural participation. However, many German adolescents have severe difficulties in writing. Particularly students at the *Hauptschule*, a school that offers Lower Secondary Education (10 to 16 years of age), consistently fall short of learning targets, with students whose first language is not German being especially at risk (Neumann & Lehmann, 2008). Many German scholars have pointed out that students need better support in writing (Merz-Grötsch, 2010; Neumann, 2018; Philipp, 2015), but research and most empirical studies, including large-scale assessments, tend to focus on reading rather than writing (for a critique, see Philipp, 2018). Furthermore, little is known about German educators' beliefs on teaching writing or their actual classroom practices (Neumann, 2018; Philipp, 2018). One way to gain insights into the values and beliefs that underlie teaching writing in German schools is to scrutinise relevant educational guidelines. To this end, we analyse two kinds of key policy documents: the more general national *Educational Standards* (KMK, 2004), which formulate the joint educational interests and objectives for all federal states, and the federal *Curricula*, which provide specific guidance for the individual federal states (Baden-Wuerttemberg, 2016; Berlin, 2017; Bremen, 2010; Lower Saxony, 2014; Rhineland-Palatinate, 1998; Saxony, 2009).

This chapter focuses on the set of competencies associated with the *Hauptschule* diploma, which can be earned after Year 9 (ages 14 to 15), the earliest school year after which students can move out of formal education and into the professional sphere; as such, adequate competencies must be acquired by this time. We begin by providing a brief overview of historical factors that have influenced the development of policy documents in Germany. Then, we analyse sample policy documents via six discourses of writing and teaching writing as proposed by Ivanič (2004). We proceed with a summary of the main findings, revealing that only two of the latter discourses are well represented within the examined documents. A short discussion of relevant

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research on teaching writing in German-speaking countries[1] shows that the two types of policy documents are not only misaligned with international discourses of writing but are also out of step with the values and beliefs of scholars of writing and teaching writing in German-speaking countries.

Theoretical background

Historical overview of German writing education

Beliefs about writing and approaches to teaching writing have undergone various changes over the last century. Figure 7.1 illustrates how changes paralleled the evolution of political ideology in a shifting education system. We focus on beliefs about writing and teaching writing from the mid-nineteenth century to the turn of the millennium that can still be traced in current policy documents.

In the mid-nineteenth century (*German Empire*), a compulsory schooling system was introduced which was subdivided into several levels and differed according to both student performance and occupational trajectories (vocational focus: *Haupt-* and *Realschule*, academic focus: *Gymnasium*) (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012). Teaching writing mostly occurred in composition classes (*Aufsatzunterricht*), which were developed during the industrial age in response to societal changes and citizens' need to communicate effectively via written texts. During this period, teaching writing

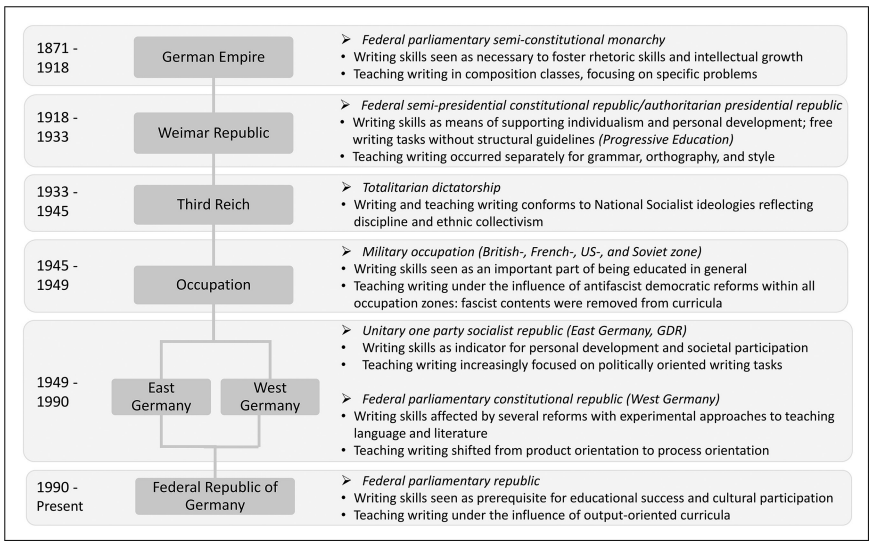


Figure 7.1 Chronological overview of contextual factors that influence the alignment of the school system and the attitudes and values of teaching writing

focused on stylistic training to expand learners' persuasive writing ability and to support both intellectual and educational growth (Paefgen, 2006). Writing tasks focused on specific problems of everyday life, and good writing was characterised by correct spelling and identifiable formal structure (Becker-Mrotzek & Böttcher, 2018) modelled on Latin, Ancient Greek, or German prose (Paefgen, 2006).

At the beginning of the twentieth century (*Weimar Republic*), writing was largely seen as a means of supporting personal development and individualism. As such, writing classes focused on new forms of freewriting, which did not involve any guidelines regarding content, form, or language (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012). Sub-domains of writing, like grammar, orthography, and stylistic training, were usually outsourced to separate courses and were developed into autonomous branches of German lessons (Becker-Mrotzek & Böttcher, 2018). This approach can be ascribed to the progressive education reform of the 1920s (*Reformpädagogik*), which focused on students' interests and renounced drilled learning. The emergence of Nazi politics extinguished the fledgling education reform: writing had to align with *Third Reich* ideals of education, pivoting from individualism to discipline and ethnic collectivism, and literature was often instrumentalised to promote devotion to Nazi ideology (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012).

After *World War II*, German territory was subdivided into four occupation zones, which by 1949 merged into East (Soviet sector) and West Germany (British, French, and US district) with both countries working to dismantle Nazism in the various facets of society, including education. In an attempt to create political order which would prevent any future concentration of power, the Soviet sector carried out the careful removal of fascist, militarised, or reactionary literature (Hohmann, 1997), while West Germany re-established federalism, building on the foundation of the German Empire and Weimar Republic (Hohmann, 1997). Germany's division into two countries with separate governments had a profound impact on both educational systems; their respective development is characterised by opposing phases with nonlinear evolution.

As *East Germany (GDR)* evolved from the Soviet occupation zone, policymakers began merging the three-tiered system into a mostly unitary education system (Hohmann, 1997). While the West German education system aimed to support each student in earning a diploma respective to his or her performance, the GDR-system sought to regulate access to higher education. The regulation favoured high-ability, yet politically opportune students and thus disadvantaged other students (Baumert et al., 2008). This served to align work and occupation distribution with the socialist ideology of an industrial and agricultural society (Hohmann, 1997). Education aimed to educate "the socialist citizen who gladly adheres to the societal convention" ("*Schaffung des sozialistischen Menschen …, der sich in dem Menschheitsganzen freudig einordnet*"; Hohmann, 1997, p. 13). Within socialist

society, there was broad interest in citizens achieving mastery in all areas of language to express personal development and to accomplish societal goals (Oehme, 2010). Thus, German lessons focused especially on teaching socialist values and beliefs, and expression classes (*Ausdrucksunterricht*) focused on oral and written expressions separately (Oehme, 2010). While in the first years of the GDR, writing tasks involved expressing oneself and conveying meaning (e.g., writing depictions of reality; Lehrplan, 1951); over time, the number of political and ideological texts grew, and critical, free-thinking was increasingly discouraged (Oehme, 2010).

The *West German* education system retained the established three-tiered system, and German lessons taught the literary canon in reading and form classes, while essay writing was taught in composition[2] classes (Bredel, 2003). In the mid and late 1960s, attitudinal changes regarding the role of education in society and its accessibility to those who had not traditionally completed higher education (e.g., women and people from working-class households) initiated educational reforms. In the aftermath of Nazism, society began questioning authoritative stances, and educational contents were increasingly perceived as being bourgeois and ideologically corrupt. However, due to the previous instrumentalisation of language and literature for propaganda purposes by the *Third Reich*, educators sought to prevent ideological diversion. Consequently, German lessons were remoulded: language instruction was outsourced to other classes, and innovative approaches to teaching grammar and new concepts of emancipated literature were introduced to modernise the literary canon (Bredel, 2003). Despite these changes, assessment of writing quality was not altered from previous approaches and was based on features of the writing product only (e.g., its syntactical complexity) (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012). Simultaneously in the United States and Canada, a decline in students' writing competencies triggered an interest in developing methods for analysing the writing process (Hayes & Flower, 1980). West Germany followed suit in the mid-1970s, and research on teaching writing in Germany developed into an independent branch of German studies at universities (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012) with scholars paying more attention to the writing process (e.g., Ludwig, 1983). This point in time also saw the promotion of subjective, creative writing forms and texts, and starting in the 1980s, a growing abandonment of traditional grammar teaching (Merz-Grötsch, 2010).

German reunification in 1990 led to the incorporation of East and West Germany into a common German state which retained many aspects of West German political and societal structure. Differences between values and beliefs held in the East and the West, particularly regarding education, became even more apparent during this period, and former East German states had to re-implement the three-tiered school system (see Figure 7.2) (Baumert et al., 2008). However, due to the relative autonomy of federal states, names of school types, graduation types, and diplomas vary.

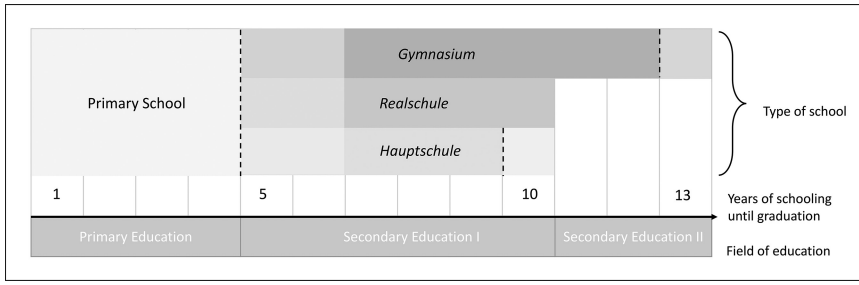


Figure 7.2 The traditional German school system[4]

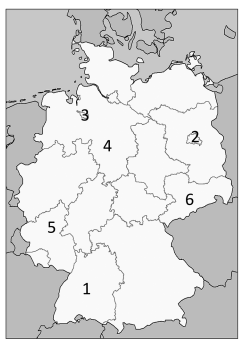
Achievement outcomes and current developments in policy documents

In 2000, German students participated for the first time in the triennial *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) and ranked 21st of 28 participating countries (Stanat et al., 2002) — a result perceived as a public disappointment which is now termed the *PISA-Schock* (Otterspeer, 2019). A growing public demand for action from political authorities to improve educational outcomes followed, and the *Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs* (KMK)[3] initiated a pivot from input-controlled (i.e., specifying which content should be taught) to output-oriented educational policies. This new focus on performance outputs (which were defined for different school degrees) was deemed necessary to keep German students' performance competitive in the international arena (Klieme et al., 2007). To this end, the KMK implemented nationwide *Educational Standards* for core subjects (German, mathematics, and foreign languages) and natural sciences in 2003 and 2004 (Köller, 2007). These requirements are specified in the federal *Curricula*, which additionally define target competencies for year groups. The *Curricula* rely on the *Educational Standards* as a template and further consult schools, universities, professional associations, and educational interest groups (Köller, 2007). The *Educational Standards* (KMK, 2004) name four overarching competence domains that all students should master in German: 1) *speaking and listening*, 2) *writing*, 3) *reading and examining texts and media*, and 4) *examining language and its use*. To address target skills, the four competence domains are further defined by key points, a structure reflected and further specified in the federal *Curricula*.

Little is known whether the changes in policy documents have enhanced German students' writing performance. Although PISA claims to address numeracy and literacy (Baumert & Stanat, 2001), it focuses only on reading (Artelt & Schlagmüller, 2004). The only large-scale writing assessment in Germany, the DESI-study (*Deutsch Englisch Schülerleistungen International*), was conducted in 2003 and 2004 with students in Year 9. Results revealed that

one-third of students at all school types scored at the basic level for language skills, while 23% of students had major difficulties regarding pragmatic use of written language, and 35% struggled with orthography, punctuation, and grammar (Neumann & Lehmann, 2008). DESI-results also revealed that 50% of Year 9 students in *Haupt-* and *Gesamtschule* (an inclusive school) could not write coherent texts in German. Both school types tend to have a higher percentage of disadvantaged students and students with migration backgrounds than the more academic *Gymnasium*. Students' texts often did not go beyond an associative concatenation of sentences, contained major sentence structure flaws, and thus, failed to fulfil communicative purposes. Students with a first language other than German were at a particular disadvantage (Neumann & Lehmann, 2008).

Although the DESI-results highlighted German students' writing needs and the necessity to promote writing (Neumann & Lehmann, 2008), subsequent efforts to assess and promote literacy focused mostly on reading competencies (Artelt & Schlagmüller, 2004). Comparable follow-up studies on the development of (all areas of) writing have yet to be conducted with German students (Philipp, 2018). More recent national studies on writing, such as the triennial *IQB Bildungstrend* (Schipolowski et al., 2016), focus on subskills including orthography and vocabulary. This particular study compares educational outcomes between Germany's federal states and is conducted with a representative sample of students in Year 9. Figure 7.3 illustrates recent results of six federal states in Germany, highlighting the considerable variation between states. For example, there is a wide discrepancy between students' performance in Saxony, where only 10.9% and 8.7% of students fall short of learning targets in reading and orthography respectively, compared to Bremen, where a higher percentage of students are not reaching minimum requirements (35.5% for reading and 21.9% for orthography). These discrepancies may be due to demographic differences, as Bremen, a small



Federal State	Reading below minimum requirements	Reading at minimum requirements	Orthography below minimum requirements	Orthography at minimum requirements
1) Baden- Wuerttemberg	24.8%	28.8%	13.2%	19.4%
2) Berlin	29.9%	26.9%	18.4%	21.9%
3) Bremen	35.5%	29.0%	21.9%	24.1%
4) Lower Saxony	21%	32.1%	10.2%	21.8%
5) Rhineland- Palatinate	22.3%	29.6%	10.5%	20.6%
6) Saxony	10.9%	27.5%	8.7%	21.1%

Figure 7.3 Students' performance in reading and orthography for *Hauptschule* graduation according to IQB Bildungstrend (Schipolowski et al., 2016)

city-state with comparatively lower expenditures on education is, similarly to Berlin, more linguistically and culturally diverse than Saxony (in Berlin and Bremen, 28.3% and 30.9% of the populations have a migration background, respectively, compared to 7.0% in Saxony; IntMK, 2019).

In summary, the DESI-study of 2003 and 2004 showed that a large proportion of German students in Year 9 have problems with text production. The more recent *IQB Bildungstrend* suggests that, on average, 13.8% of students in Year 9 do not reach minimum requirements in orthography. However, little is known about other aspects of writing competence, as current national testing continues to assess literacy by measuring reading and orthography only. To evaluate students' writing more comprehensively, it is necessary to first uncover underlying assumptions of what constitutes good writing in German policy documents and to find out which writing products students in Year 9 are expected to produce.

The present study

To explore relevant policy documents, we draw on Ivanič's (2004) summary of discourses of writing (DoW) and learning to write, which are derived from various conceptualisations of literacy in anglophone countries. Drawing on Gee's (1996) definition of the term *discourse*, Ivanič (2004, p. 224) defines discourses as "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." Ivanič distinguishes six DoW (i.e., *skills*, *creativity*, *process*, *genre*, *social practices*, and *sociopolitical*), which are described in detail in Chapter 1 and which have also been used by other writing scholars to uncover values and beliefs regarding writing and teaching writing (e.g., Stagg Peterson, 2012; Stagg Peterson et al., 2018). However, as the DoW are informed by research on teaching writing in anglophone countries, the discourses may not entirely reflect the German perspective, and thus references to additional discourses may be expected in the examined policy documents.

We, therefore, address the following research questions:

1 *To what extent are the individual discourses outlined by Ivanič present in German policy documents?*
2 *Which additional topics are present that cannot be aligned to the discourses outlined by Ivanič?*

Methodology

In order to uncover values and beliefs of writing, we firstly explore the national *Educational Standards*, which inform federal policy to ensure that students' skill level at graduation is comparable across federal states (Füssel

& Leschinsky, 2008). Secondly, we look at the *Curricula*, specifically for the *Hauptschule* diploma (*Hauptschulabschluss*), which define federal minimum competencies that must be obtained to enter the professional sphere.

Our analysis focuses on a sample of six federal states, which represent Germany's distinct regions: North (Lower Saxony), East (Saxony), South (Baden-Wuerttemberg), and West (Rhineland-Palatinate), as well as two city-states (Berlin and Bremen). Among these, until German reunification in 1990, Saxony and half of Berlin belonged to East Germany. Figure 7.3 shows the location of the different states and the differing literacy outcomes in these regions.

In both types of policy documents for German as a subject, the *Educational Standards* (KMK, 2004) and *Curricula* (Baden-Wuerttemberg, 2016; Berlin, 2017; Bremen, 2010; Lower Saxony, 2014; Rhineland-Palatinate, 1998; Saxony, 2009), *writing* is conveyed alongside three other foci such as: 1) *speaking and listening*, 2) *reading and examining texts and media*, as well as 3) *examining language and its use* (see Achievement Outcomes), which do not fall within the scope of this chapter. Only those parts of the policy documents, which made explicit reference to writing, were used for analysis. As federal states have some autonomy in defining learning aims and *Curriculum* content taught at school (see Achievement Outcomes), differences between federal *Curricula* are to be expected.

The following procedure (see Figure 7.4) was conducted by two independent raters: we identified references to writing or related skills in the policy

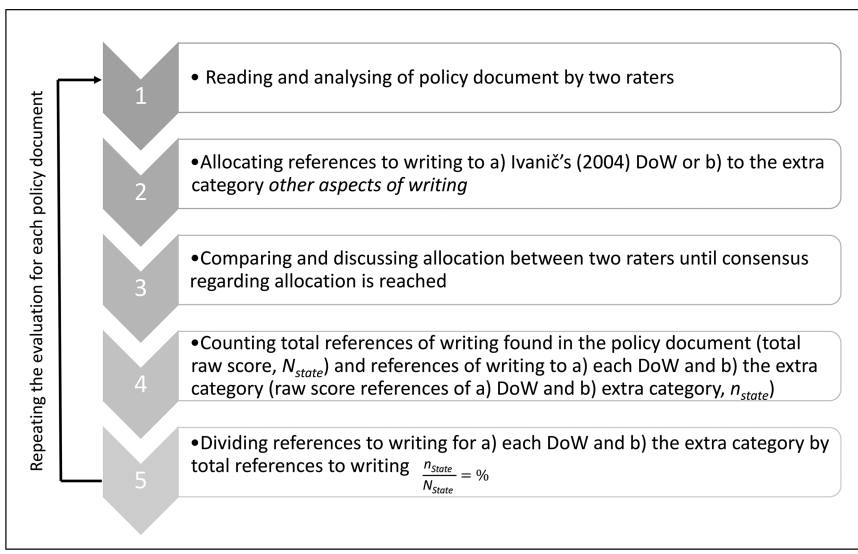


Figure 7.4 Procedure for analysing policy documents

documents and analysed the documents by focusing on the listed key points, which define target learning outcomes and form the centrepieces of each of the examined *Curricula* (1). We analysed documents based on identifiable output statements, but when present, identifiable input statements (e.g., regarding methods to be used in the classroom) were also considered. All references to writing were then allocated to their respective DoW or to the extra category *other aspects of writing* (2). The references to *other aspects of writing* were subsequently subdivided into five themes. The allocation was discussed in cases of disagreement (3). After all references were allocated, we counted the total references to writing (total raw score of key points) (4). Table 7.1 shows the total number of references in each document that could be assigned to the DoW while Table 7.2 shows the total number of references that were allocated to *other aspects of writing*. As the total number of references to writing or related skills differs in each state, we divided the number of references to writing for a particular DoW or the extra category by the total references to writing found in the given policy document (5). Thus, we calculated the percentage of references to a particular DoW or the *other aspects of writing* for each policy document. These steps were repeated for every policy document in the study.

Our process draws on the six-step approach used by Radnor (2001), but the first two steps of ordering topics and constructing categories were replaced by the use of the DoW summarised by Ivanič (2004). Furthermore, the last step of data analysis was conducted in both a qualitative and quantitative way, as we counted how frequently references to the discourses were made. It is worth noting that instead of resulting in standalone figures for analysis, our quantitative method of frequency counting enabled a systematic approach to analyse qualitative data (Huberman & Miles, 1994) and to help detect the emphases that policy documents place on themes and discourses.

The references, which could not be allocated to the discourses introduced by Ivanič (2004), were subdivided into five categories: *digital literacy, strategy instruction, academic writing, vocational preparation*, and *visual presentation* (see Table 7.2). *Digital literacy* constitutes, according to Aviram and Eshet-Alkalai (2006), proficiency in a) reading and deduction, b) reproduction, c) navigation through, d) searching and locating, and e) socialising and consuming in the context of digital information. We allocated all references to the use of computers and unspecified writing forms that require the use of text software to this category.

Policy documents also contained references to *strategy instruction*, which could often be allocated to the DoW (e.g., drafting was allocated to the *process* discourse). However, strategies that were not specifically process-oriented (e.g., using lexica) were allocated to the extra category *strategy instruction*.

Additionally, we could detect references to citation in the policy documents, which may be allocated to *academic writing*. Although academic writing might be considered a facet of the *genre* discourse, neither the *Educational*

Table 7.1 Document sample and raw scores of references to Ivanič's (2004) discourses of writing

	Educational Standards (*KMK, 2004*)	*Baden-Wuerttemberg (2016)*	*Berlin (2017)*	*Bremen (2010)*	*Lower Saxony (2014)*	*Rhineland-Palatinate (1998)*	*Saxony (2009)*	*Total (all documents)*
Length of complete document (pages)	48	105	45	30	34	274	67	603
Valid for Year(s) of schooling	9	5–10	1–10	5–10	5–10	5–10	5–10	--
Total number of references to writing (raw score of key points) allocated to DoW	22	54	23	12	45	26	16	198
References to the *genre* discourse	8	15	4	4	13	22	4	70
References to the *skills* discourse	6	27	14	3	8	0	6	64
References to the *process* discourse	7	2	4	2	6	3	1	25
References to the *creativity* discourse	1	0	1	0	4	1	1	8
References to *other aspects of writing*	0	10	0	3	14	0	4	31

Table 7.2 Raw scores of references that could not be allocated to Ivanič's discourses

	Baden-Wuerttemberg (2016)	*Bremen (2010)*	*Lower Saxony (2014)*	*Saxony (2009)*	*Total (all documents)*
Total number of references to *other aspects of writing* (raw score of key points)	10	3	14	4	31
References to *digital literacy*	3	1	7	0	11
References to *strategy instruction*	4	1	2	0	7
References to *academic writing*	0	1	2	2	5
References to *vocational preparation*	1	0	3	0	4
References to *visual presentation*	2	0	0	2	4

Standards nor the *Curricula* mention academic writing as a *genre* to be learnt but instead focus only on technical competencies such as the correct use of citations and sources. We thus allocated these references to the extra category of *academic writing*.

The references subsumed in *vocational preparation* refer to CV and application letter writing and written employment test practice. As the use of writing tasks for vocational education touches upon real-life practices, these references could theoretically be allocated to the *social practices* discourse. However, we allocated such references to *vocational preparation* because they lack the social (e.g., "taking on the identity of community membership"; Ivanič, 2004, p. 234) and sociological (e.g., power dynamics) aspects of the discourse and only highlight technical competencies. Arguably, there is some overlap between the references allocated to the category *vocational preparation* and the category *digital literacy*, since some references involve the use of media (e.g., writing a CV with text software). Provided that a reference explicitly refers to vocational purposes, we allocated it to *vocational preparation*.

Finally, there were references to layout and formatting. Due to the lack of explicit reference to language, these references could not be allocated to either the *genre* or the *skills* discourse by Ivanič (2004); we, therefore, allocated them to the category *visual presentation*.

Results

For the research question 1) *To what extent are the individual discourses outlined by Ivanič present in German policy documents?*, the results of our analysis reveal that some discourses are more prevalent within policy documents than others are. This particularly applies to the *genre* and *skills* discourses, with the majority of references falling into these two categories. Considerably fewer references

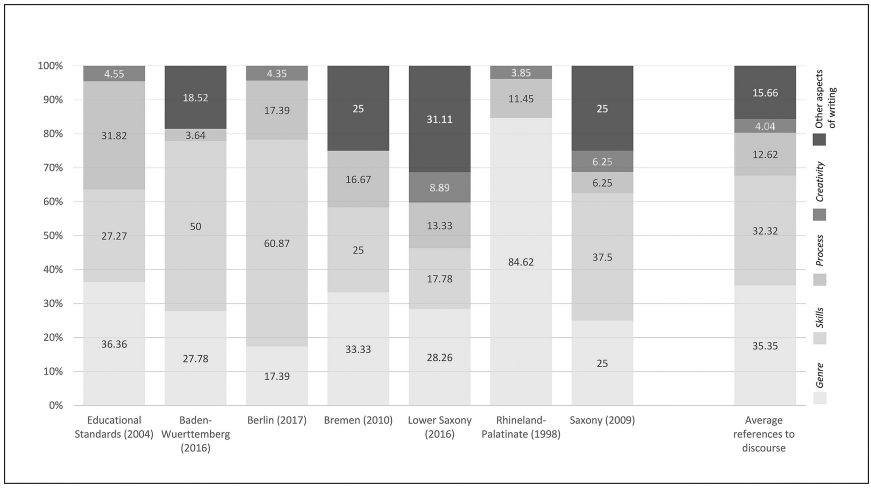


Figure 7.5 Percentage of raw scores divided by the total number of references in each document

were made to *process* and *creativity*-related aspects of writing, and neither the *sociopolitical* nor the *social practices* discourses were identified at all. That is, out of the six DoW, only four could be detected in the examined documents. Figure 7.5 shows the raw scores of key points in the examined documents divided by the total number of references to writing as well as percentages to illustrate relative occurrence.

The analysis reveals that the national *Educational Standards* and most of the federal states make ample references to different writing forms which have to be learned, (e.g., descriptions, letters, reports, argumentative essays, and expressions of opinion), and/or hints to the writing purpose (e.g., argumentative, descriptive, expository, and narrative writing). These references clearly fit the *genre* discourse. Although the purpose of writing is not further defined, the distinction of writing in different social requirements (Ivanič, 2004) is made, e.g., through references to letter writing (writing a formal or business letter; Rhineland-Palatinate, 1998, p. 107). A particularly strong focus is set by Rhineland-Palatinate (22 references, 84.62%) and Bremen (four references, 33.33%), while Berlin makes relatively fewer references (four references, 17.39%) (see Figure 7.5). The documents containing a rather detailed focus on the *genre* discourse stipulate that students command a wide set of basic writing forms (e.g., descriptions, recommendations, requests, and letters of apology). However, across the *Educational Standards* and *Curricula*, no clear distinction between writing forms and their communicative purposes is made and documents show marked differences in how they address the *genre* discourse. For instance, the Baden-Wuerttemberg *Curriculum* (2016, p. 45) states that students are required to carry out informative writing (purpose)

in the form of summaries (form), while the Berlin *Curriculum* (2017, p. 23) only stipulates that students should be able to inform about complex issues (purpose) without any references to form. Most of the documents require the students to align features of their texts' form and content with both the target audience and the texts' communicative purpose (Bremen, 2010, p. 23; KMK, 2004, p. 10; Rhineland-Palatinate, 1998, p. 108). As opposed to Bremen, Saxony, and Berlin, the Baden-Wuerttemberg, Lower Saxony, and Rhineland-Palatinate *Curricula* additionally provide rather extensive detail about good structure for these writing forms by proposing intermediate writing products, e.g., writing down pro and contra arguments or opinion statements when writing informative texts (e.g., Lower Saxony, 2014, p. 17). Not every curriculum refers to the entire set of writing forms stipulated within the *Educational Standards*, but at minimum stipulates the genre of argumentative writing. The *Curricula* that contain fewer references to the *genre* discourse (e.g., Berlin) fall short of stipulating that students command all writing forms and contain fewer intermediate steps.

The analysis further reveals that the *skills* discourse, which underlines the importance of spelling and grammar (Ivanič, 2004, p. 227), is referred to in most of the examined policy documents. However, the frequency of references to the *skills* discourse varies, with the *Educational Standards* (six references, 27.27%) and states like Baden-Wuerttemberg (27 references, 50%) and Berlin (14 references, 60.87%) placing a particularly large focus on the *skills* discourse. Saxony (six references, 37.5%) and Bremen (three references, 25%) place less importance in comparison, and Rhineland-Palatinate does not include the *skills* discourse at all. Those *Curricula* with a strong focus on the *skills* discourse emphasise that students are required to command thorough knowledge of orthography, punctuation, and spelling strategies (Saxony, 2016, p. 38). Because spelling is challenging in German, particularly the capitalisation of nouns and nominalised verbs, it is surprising that spelling strategies are neither further defined nor are examples provided. The *Curricula* further require that students are able to recognise and explain several grammatical phenomena (e.g., morphology, tense conjugation, plural form, gender, and case) and apply their knowledge (Baden-Wuerttemberg, 2016, p. 58; Berlin, 2017, p. 19; Lower Saxony, 2014, p. 15). However, they do not state that this knowledge should be applied in writing activities or extended writing pieces. Implementing grammar exercises separate from writing would thus also suffice according to the *Curricula*.

The *Educational Standards* refer to the *process* discourse, as students should acquire the ability to "plan" and "revise" their texts (KMK, 2004, p. 12f.) (seven references, 31.82%). However, relatively little is said about the procedural character of writing itself, and there is a focus on methods for planning the writing process ("setting up a writing plan and drawing on several sources of information, such as libraries, reference works, newspaper, the internet"; KMK, 2004, p. 12). In the *Curricula*, the *process* discourse is even less present,

with Baden-Wuerttemberg making no references to planning and only two references to revising (3.64%). The *Curricula* of the city-states (Bremen: two references, 16.67%; and Berlin: four references, 17.39%) and to some extent Lower Saxony (six references, 13.33%) afford slightly more attention to process-related aspects of writing. However, similarly to the *Educational Standards*, *Curricula* in these states mostly refer to methods of planning the writing process, many of which are not very precise (e.g., "purposeful planning of their writing processes"; Berlin, 2017, p. 22). The Berlin *Curriculum* goes slightly beyond these requirements by stipulating that students should be able to purposefully plan and reflect on distinct writing processes (Berlin, 2017, p. 22); however, they lack explicit acknowledgement that students need to conceptualise writing as a process in order to attain the understanding that every text needs to be planned and revised. Of the examined policy documents, only Lower Saxony makes references that are clearly in line with the *process* discourse introduced by Ivanič (2004), explicitly stating, for example, that students should recognise writing as a process (Lower Saxony, 2014, p. 18). Furthermore, Lower Saxony's and, to some extent, Baden-Wuerttemberg's *Curricula*, go beyond the methodological aspects of writing, and—in accordance with the DoW—include the use of feedback methods in the editing phase, although only by mentioning methods such as *Textlupe* (text magnifying glass—a peer feedback template) and *Schreibkonferenz* (writing conference) (Baden-Wuerttemberg, 2016, p. 15; Lower Saxony, 2014, p. 18).

References that align with the *creativity* discourse (Ivanič, 2004) are almost absent in both the *Educational Standards* and *the Curricula*. In the *Educational Standards*, there is just one reference stating that creative writing techniques should be utilised (KMK, 2004, p. 12). Baden-Wuerttemberg's and Bremen's *Curricula* do not contain any references to creativity. Lower Saxony makes four methodological references by mentioning associative activities or writing games, which are not further defined but should be implemented as impulses for creativity ("associative techniques, writing games, writing according to guidelines, rules and patterns"; Lower Saxony, 2014, p. 16). Berlin and Saxony at least minimally include creativity-related learning aims stating that students should creatively rearrange passages of a text (Berlin, 2017, p. 23; Saxony, 2009, p. 33). However, the policy documents do not value creativity as an avenue of self-expression and only focus on creative methods as tools to stimulate writing in the classroom. This narrow focus does not align with the description of the discourse proposed by Ivanič (2004, p. 229).

For the research question 2) *Which additional topics are present that cannot be aligned to the discourses outlined by Ivanič?*, four of the examined *Curricula* contain references that could not be allocated to any of the DoW. These references, reported in Figure 7.6, focus on five main areas: *digital literacy*, *strategy instruction*, *academic writing, vocational preparation*, and *visual presentation*.

The references to *digital literacy* focus on the use of computers and text software for writing, or the ability to depict information with digital

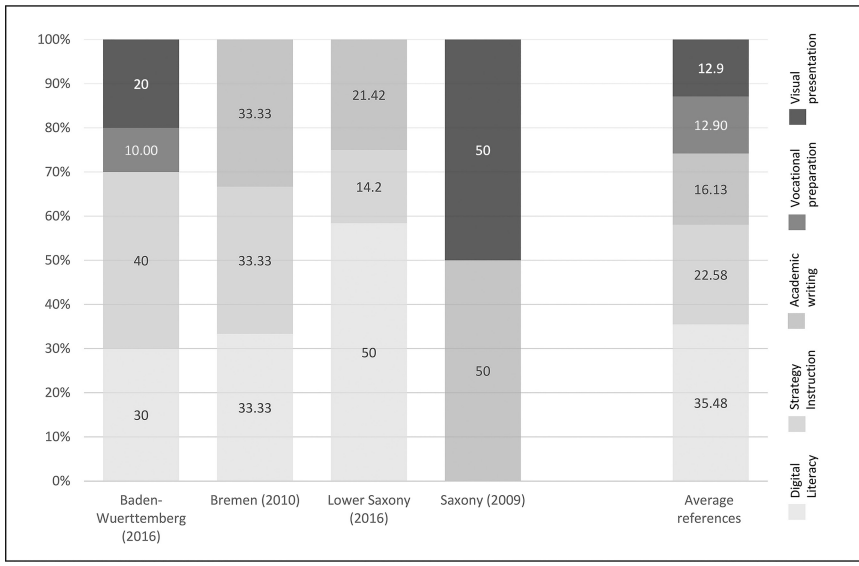


Figure 7.6 Distribution of other aspects of writing which could not be aligned to specific discourses provided by Ivanič (2004)

media (Bremen, 2010, p. 23; Lower Saxony, 2014, p. 16), and mostly stem from the *Curricula* in Lower Saxony (seven references, 50%), Baden-Wuerttemberg, and Bremen (both around 30%). In addition, there are references to *strategy instruction* like summarising content or using lexica, with Baden-Wuerttemberg making the most references (four references; Baden-Wuerttemberg, 2016, p. 20). Explicit references to *academic writing* (which only refers to correct use of citations) are most salient in Bremen and Saxony (Bremen, 2010, p. 22; Saxony, 2009, p. 32). The references to *vocational preparation* are most prevalent in Lower Saxony's *Curriculum*. These include writing CVs and application letters and practising written employment tests (Lower Saxony, 2014 p. 16). Finally, Saxony's *Curriculum* also addresses the *visual presentation* of texts (layout, paragraph breaks, spacing, and text margins) (Saxony, 2009, p. 32).

Discussion

In our document analysis, we explored values and beliefs of writing in German educational policy documents. In particular, we wanted to find out to what extent the DoW outlined by Ivanič (2004) are present in German policy documents and to identify additional topics that cannot be aligned to the DoW. We analysed two kinds of documents: the national *Educational Standards* and a sample of six federal *Curricula*. Although we found considerable

variation between the Curricula, which is due to the federal independent organisation of education in Germany, there were four common tendencies:

1 The analysis revealed that the *genre* and *skills* discourses are the most prominent DoW in German policy documents. This is also the case in other countries represented in this book, for instance, the *genre* discourse is also dominant in Norway and Uzbekistan (this volume), while the *skills* discourse seems equally dominant in Chile, England, and the United States (this volume). Reasons for the dominance (or absence) of a particular DoW might be quite country-specific; in the German context, the high prevalence of the *genre* and *skills* discourses may have historical roots (see Historical Overview). Writing quality was traditionally equated with formal correctness and context-appropriateness of texts according to their communicative or persuasive purpose (*Aufsatzunterricht*). In the 1970s and 1980s, teaching formal aspects of writing was then outsourced to separate writing courses; at the turn of the millennium, this approach was criticised for contributing to German students' shortfall in large-scale school assessments (Bredel, 2003). This might have had an impact on the reimplementation of the outdated *skills* tradition into German policy documents.

   Another factor that could contribute to the *genre* and *skills* DoW prominence in the national *Educational Standards* and the *Curricula* could be the output-orientation of current German policy documents (KMK, 2004). This involves focusing on attainment in competencies that are easy to assess, such as orthography, punctuation, or grammar but also on whether students adhere to certain text forms. Note, for instance, that in the DESI-study (Neumann & Lehmann, 2008), the only comprehensive large-scale assessment of writing, which went beyond orthography, writing skills were assessed by asking students to write a personal letter and a letter of complaint to a company. In letter writing as a *genre*, formal aspects are very important in German; for example, the use of second-person singular pronouns (i.e., "you"), such as the formal word "*Sie*" vs. the informal "*du*" are easily identifiable and thus measurable.

   International studies reveal that teachers tend to focus more on the aspects of writing that align with the *skills* discourse than on structural features or content (e.g., Lee, 2008; 2013). Though comparable results for the German context are absent, one may expect that German teachers have a similar tendency due to the prominence of the *skills* discourse in the *Curricula*. As Neumann (2018) highlights, there is little known about German teachers' content-related and pedagogical knowledge of teaching writing, and more insight is needed on how they implement their knowledge in the writing classroom. In a small inquiry with 20 teachers of Year 5–10, Neumann (2012) found that several feedback and revising methods such as writing games or writing conferences were used at least

once a month. However, these findings may not be representative, since other researchers and practitioners report that across different subjects, writing occurs infrequently and is often limited to copying texts or writing key points or short sentences (Porsch, 2010; Thürmann, 2012), which does not contribute to the development of coherent writing.

It is also of concern that the focus of current empirical research foregrounds the *skills* discourse. A recent overview of different empirical studies on teaching German in German-speaking countries (Boelmann, 2018) reveals that out of 19 chapters of the edited book, only three focus on writing: two focus on grammar and orthography, and only one (Neumann, 2018) touches upon other features of the text, e.g., structure. Hence, further empirical studies are needed: a) to uncover insights into teachers' classroom practices of teaching writing and b) to promote writing beyond the acquisition of skills such as grammar and orthography.

Despite policy documents' strong focus on *skills*, recent large-scale studies still show that many German students have severe difficulties regarding orthography, with a high percentage of underperforming students in the city-states (Schipolowski et al., 2016). Strikingly, Berlin, which sets the strongest focus on the *skills* discourse in the *Curricula*, has one of the highest percentages of underperforming students, whereas Saxony, which pays comparably less attention to this discourse, has a larger number of students who reach the learning target (see Figure 7.3). Causes for differing assessment results are manifold, and differences in educational history (see Historical Overview) and population (e.g., number of L2 learners) are likely to play a role. However, results from feedback research show that focusing on *skills* like orthography and grammar is not only less useful for improving writing performance than is feedback which focuses on content and form (Biber et al., 2011; see also Busse, 2019) but may also lower writing motivation (Busse, 2016). To teach writing holistically, writing scholars stipulate that the *skills*-related aspects of writing need to be embedded into appropriate contexts (see also Graham & Perin, 2007b; Philipp, 2018).

2 There are relatively few references to the *process* DoW in the German policy documents, which is reminiscent of policy documents in New Zealand and Norway (this volume). In the German context, the underrepresentation of the *process* DoW in both the *Educational Standards* and the federal *Curricula* is rather surprising, as the process-oriented model by Hayes and Flower (1980) was received well by German writing scholars (e.g., Ludwig, 1983). In fact, an exploratory review of relevant literature on teaching writing in German-speaking countries reveals that scholars give very detailed suggestions regarding the implementation of the basic pattern of planning, drafting, writing, and revising in the classroom (Fix, 2008; Philipp, 2018; for revision, see also Kruse & Ruhmann, 2006) although, admittedly, less attention is paid to feedback processes (for an

exception, see e.g., Busse, 2015). Writing conferences, where peers provide feedback, pose comprehension questions, and teachers make suggestions regarding structure, language, and orthography, have long become part of the literature on primary school writing education (Spitta, 1992), and are also recommended for secondary school (Reuschling, 2000). Nevertheless, *process*-related aspects of writing are hardly referred to in the *Curricula*, except for in those of Lower Saxony (2014) and Baden-Wuerttemberg (2016) where feedback methods are mentioned, but only in passing. As the revision process should include collaboration and feedback methods which in turn involve teachers, tutors, or peers (Philipp, 2018), genuine process-oriented writing would need to move away from the view of the writer being solely responsible for the writing product. Therefore, the *process* DoW is not adequately addressed in the *Curricula*.

3 The *creativity* discourse is largely absent within the examined German policy documents, an absence which can also be noted in policy documents from England, New Zealand, and Norway (this volume). Nevertheless, German writing scholars advocate for the application of *creative* writing forms, such as freewriting in response to stimuli like pictures, objects, art, or nature to foster students' ability to express themselves aesthetically (e.g., Becker-Mrotzek & Böttcher, 2018). Scholars also highlight that creative writing could be used within literature classes as a strategy to aid students in literary text comprehension (Spinner, 2010). The absence of the *creativity* DoW may thus not be attributed to a lack of attention by scholars in German-speaking countries, but perhaps to the fact that it cannot easily be judged as right or wrong, and learning outcomes are therefore more difficult to measure.

4 There are no references to the *sociopolitical* and *social practice* DoW in the German policy documents, which is likewise the case in Denmark, England, and Hong Kong (this volume). An exploratory review suggests that the *sociopolitical* discourse is also largely absent in literature on teaching writing in German-speaking countries. This is not surprising as this discourse is considered to be characteristic for US-American research on fostering writing (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012). However, the *social practice* DoW is present in contemporary literature on teaching writing (e.g., Ossner, 1995; Sturm & Weder, 2018) insomuch as scholars in German-speaking countries stress that classes should be seen as writing communities, and writing tasks should involve real writing scenarios where students have to persuade each other through their writing (Sturm & Weder, 2018, p. 113). A systematic review is needed to further explore to what extent the *social practice* discourse presents itself in other literature on teaching writing in Germany (e.g., in literature for teacher education).

In our document analysis, we additionally explored which *other aspects of writing* could be found within the examined policy documents which do

not align with the DoW outlined by Ivanič (2004). For instance, documents additionally referred to writing in the context of *digital literacy*. The emphasis on the use of online media for writing varies greatly from state to state, with Rhineland-Palatinate not making any references to media at all. One likely reason is that this curriculum dates back to 1998 and was not revised after the shift to output-orientation because it already stated relevant competencies. In contrast, the other *Curricula* are much more recent (e.g., Baden-Wuerttemberg, 2016; Lower Saxony, 2014). As the use of media for writing offers new platforms for revising and developing texts, competence in digital literacy could provide opportunities to develop students' command of the writing process. In addition, there were references to *strategy instruction*, which is beneficial, especially for adolescents who have writing difficulties (Graham & Perin, 2007b). However, these references were mostly limited to the students being able to use lexica or to summarise information. Furthermore, the *Curricula* state that students are required to correctly cite sources, which were allocated to the category of *academic writing*. There were also references to *vocational preparation* (e.g., acquiring skills for completing written and online applications). The *vocational* emphasis on using writing as a means of entry into the professional sphere may be explained by the vocational focus conveyed in Year 9, particularly in the graduation type examined (*Hauptschulabschluss*). Lastly, references to the *visual presentation* of texts could be detected which stipulate that students should know how to layout texts (e.g., paragraph breaks, spacing, and text margins) using writing software. In the light of increasing digitalisation in all areas of education and everyday life, one may recommend to include digitalisation into existing DoW and explore to what extent digital media can be used to support writing and learning to write.

Conclusion

Our analysis revealed that, out of the six DoW outlined by Ivanič (2004), only the *genre* and *skills* discourses are prominent in German policy documents. The additional review of contemporary literature on teaching writing in German-speaking countries further suggests that policy documents may not adequately reflect educational scholars' current beliefs on writing.

Policy documents may show a bias towards the *genre* and the *skills* discourses due in part to historical factors and particularly due to increasing output-orientation in education. As both teachers' everyday practices, as well as teaching material and textbooks, are informed by policy documents—especially the *Curricula*—the focus on the *skills* discourse is particularly concerning. In general, more awareness is needed regarding the large gap between German policy documents and both national and international writing research. A stronger focus on writing as a process could improve writing performance, as research suggests that instructional procedures that

emphasise the process of writing (i.e., planning, revising, and editing) are a particularly successful means of fostering students' writing competence (see the meta-analysis by Graham & Perin, 2007a). The neglect of the *process* discourse within German policy documents and, in particular, the shortage of references to revision highlights the importance of raising awareness of the process of writing. Training German teachers in implementing revision and feedback methods (e.g., our current research project; Siekmann et al., 2020) may be one way to combat low achievement in writing.

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Notes

1. Although the neutral, German terms a) "*Didaktik*" and b) "*Didaktiker*," which refer to the science of teaching spoken and written German and literature, can be easily translated into English, the terms a) "didactics," and b) "didact" were avoided due to the negative and authoritative connotation they may carry in the anglophone countries. Instead, the phrases a) "research/ literature on teaching writing in German-speaking countries" (e.g., Germany, Switzerland, and Austria) and b) "writing scholar/ writing researcher" were used.
2. We translated the German word "*Aufsatzunterricht*" into "composition classes." "*Aufsatz*" can be translated as "essay," meaning scientific, argumentative and explanatory texts, but "*Aufsatz*" can also refer to creative and free writing to any topic. We, therefore, chose the translation "composition."
3. The *Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs* (KMK) is the association of 16 federal ministers who frame educational recommendations for Germany.
4. Note that in the 1970s, another school type was introduced similar to the English comprehensive school called *Gesamtschule*. This inclusive school awards *Gymnasium*, *Realschule*, and *Hauptschule* diplomas and is neglected in this simplified overview.

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