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Teacher Trainees' Perception of Practising Process Approach in Descriptive Essay Writing in English

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Abstract

The low performance of teacher trainees in descriptive essay writing calls for the review of the approach to teaching writing. The teacher trainees faced problems in the areas of idea organization, elaboration and word choice. A lot of research has been conducted to investigate whether Process Writing has any influence on improving learners' writing skills. However, little is known about whether such a process has any influence on teacher trainees at the Malaysian Teacher Education Institutes (MTEI's). This study, therefore, is aimed at exploring the teacher trainees' perception of teaching descriptive essay writing in English at MTEI. This study found that initially, the teacher trainees were not able to present their ideas coherently and clearly due to weaknesses in idea organization, elaboration and word choice. The results of the interview showed that the teacher trainees preferred the Process Approach because it provided a good discussion platform for the teacher trainees. Process Writing can be successfully implemented in schools with the cooperation of the teacher trainees and the school administration. Further research could be conducted in other educational institutions to establish the effectiveness of the Process Approach.

1. Introduction

Writing is a challenging task, especially for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Writing plays a vital role in learning a language as it helps learners to express ideas, feelings and thoughts, which are also perceptible as a mode of communication in a written form (Anh, 2019). At the university level, many undergraduates struggle to master writing in English, in particular. The teacher trainees' previous exposure to writing in schools was not adequate to meet the needs of writing performance at the tertiary level. The difference between writing and the other language skills, such as speaking and listening, is that in the latter, students get to practice those skills more often. They are required to do so because that is how they communicate verbally, by listening and speaking to respond. Writing is more demanding as students have to come up with certain strategies to convey their message, get used to different tenses in various types of writing. Thus, writing is considered more laborious.

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Students in higher education are expected to have an advanced level of English. Al Fadda (2012) mentions that writing in English at advanced levels is a challenge and difficult even for most native speakers.

Li et. al. (2018) revealed that graduates are fundamentally poor in ESL language, where most teacher trainees experience difficulties in learning ESL writing compared to reading skills. The government has stepped up various efforts to improve the performance of teachers in schools. It is crucial that the writing skills of the teacher trainees be studied so that efforts can be made to bring about awareness and changes while they are still undergoing training to be English teachers. Insights into teacher trainees' language learning and writing would prove useful to teacher educators in incorporating appropriate instructional methods during English lessons.

Most of the teacher trainees from the researcher's Teacher Education Institute are of Intermediate level in English language proficiency. This was also observed in the pilot study conducted. The paper tested the TESL teacher trainees on their English language proficiency, including essay writing. The results did not reflect the quality as expected by the Malaysian Teacher Education Institute. So, it could be clearly seen that the teacher trainees have difficulty in writing essays in English. The result of a pilot study conducted with the six teacher trainees showed that they performed poorly in essay writing. It was found that they had problems in writing especially in the areas of idea organization, idea elaboration and choosing the suitable words to be used in their essay writing. The current study aims to identify the teacher trainees' perception of practising the Process Approach in descriptive essay writing in English.

2. Materials and Methods

A qualitative approach was adopted in this study to understand the English language teacher trainees' writing ability in a teacher training institute in Malaysia. According to Draper (2004), the qualitative approach can be described as a naturalistic and interpretative approach to understand social phenomena in their social settings to produce 'thick description'. Creswell and Poth (2016) point out that qualitative research is "multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative and a naturalistic approach to its subject matter".

This research was a qualitative study undertaken to identify the perception encountered by the teacher trainees in a Malaysian Teacher Education Institute (MTEI) of practising the Process Approach in descriptive essay writing in English. The study is hoped not only to be useful for the weak students but also for the good students to teach the weak students in future. Six weak Teacher Trainees were selected from the Foundation in TESL Programme. The focus of the study was on idea generation, idea elaboration and word choice. Data were collected based on the semi-structured interview. The data provided a thick description of the findings, and the findings were interpreted to help improve the Respondents' writing performance. The Case Study research design was selected due to the nature of the research questions. It offered a positive and successful avenue to understand the perception of the teacher trainees.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This section addresses the following themes: Benefits of the Process Approach, Motivation, Evaluation Process, Enhanced Teaching and Learning, Discussion Platform, Time Management, Idea Generation, and Teachers' Workload.

3.2 Benefits of Process Approach

All the Respondents except Respondent 5 agreed on the usefulness of the Process Approach in the teaching of English. Process Writing involved brainstorming, drafting, revising, reviewing, editing and publishing. Respondents recognized the importance of each stage. For instance, Respondent 1 mentioned:

Respondent 1: "*Ideas have to be generated first before one can begin to write*."
(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 3.0.1-3.0.2)

Respondent 2 mentioned:
Respondent 2: "*Idea generation should be the first step in writing, especially, in the Process Approach*."
(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 2.0.1-2.0.3)

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According to Respondent 1, idea generation was part of brainstorming. Respondent 2 emphasized the significance of idea-generation in pre-writing. Respondents 3 and 4, too, agreed, by saying:

Respondent 3: "*Undoubtedly, idea generation is essential in Process Writing. Ideas have to be conceived first before they can be expressed. If there are no ideas, then, there is no scope for writing*."
(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 2.0.1-2.0.5)

Respondent 4: "*I think idea generation lays the foundation for the Process Writing Approach*."
(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 2.0.1-2.0.3)

Initially, as noted in observation, Respondent 1 faced the challenge to generate ideas. However, after going through the Process Approach, he could write the essay as shown in the last draft reflecting the effectiveness of using the Process Approach. However, Respondent 5 differed by saying:

Respondent 5: "*I don't think so. I used to teach writing using the Product Approach. I explained the topic and discussed with my students. They started writing and produced the text without going through the intermediate stages. Their performance was good. I think the Process Approach is more suitable for the weaker students*."
(Appendix V-R5 PPISMP 3.0.1-3.0.8)

Respondent 6 shared the same view with Respondents 1, 2 3 and 4 by saying that brainstorming leads to getting ideas and ideas are expressed in written form as mentioned below:

Respondent 6: "*Writing is a tool to express ideas. Brainstorming leads to getting ideas and ideas are expressed in written form. So, teaching writing repairs brainstorming first*."
(Appendix V-R6 PPISMP 2.0.1-2.0.5)

The majority of the Respondents agreed on the importance of brainstorming in the process of writing. The Process Approach is flexible in the sense that it allows modifications during the intermediate phases before the final draft. On the whole, there is consensus that the Process Approach enhances the writing ability of the students. This view is supported by Maghsoudi & Harrison (2013), who stated that Process Writing promotes learning, encourages learners to communicate and assemble in developing their thoughts by maximizing the ability to summarize, assess and criticize.

Process Writing facilitated communication between the teacher trainees and their teacher educator, and also among themselves. This approach enabled the trainees to develop their speaking skills, besides getting fresh ideas. This was supported by Respondent 1, who mentioned:

Respondent 1: "*Well, under the conventional writing, students become more receivers of knowledge. They listen to their teachers passively. Comparatively, there is more scope for discussion and teacher feedback in the Process Writing. Students become independent*."
(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 12.0.1-2.0.7)

Respondent 4 added:
Respondent 4: "*In the case of the Process Writing, there is integration whereas conventional writing does not require much communication among the students in the same class and there is no feedback from the teachers*."
(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 11.0.1-11.0.6)

Respondent 6 is also of the same opinion when he said:
Respondent 6: "*Students have ideas. Moreover, they interact and gather more relevant information about the topic*."
(Appendix V-R6 PPISMP 6.0.1-6.0.3)

Respondents 1, 4 and 6 appreciated the role of communication in the social development of an individual. Education should promote physical, mental and social development. All the views expressed above were in line with the Social Cognitive Theory, which claims that teacher trainees become more positive in their abilities through contact with their peers. Discussion is part of the Process Writing. When discussing,

participants exchange ideas and views, and this helps to develop a friendly relationship. However, the discussion should centre around the topic, and communication must take place to convey messages for a specific purpose.

The current educational system in Malaysia is aimed at enhancing the cognitive skills of the students. Thinking helps to get ideas, and ideas are expressed in written form. Brainstorming is part of the pre-writing stage in the Process Approach. During the Brainstorming session, ideas are generated. Once ideas have been generated, it becomes easier to express them in writing. This process helps to develop writing skills in the long run. This view is supported by Respondent 5 as follows:

Respondent 5: "*As stipulated in the Process Approach, the educational system promotes team-work and creativity. Students develop their thinking skill and also become independent writers*."
(Appendix V-R5 PPISMP 8.0.1-8.0.6)

The process of analysing and applying facts to write essays contributes towards the development of cognitive skills. Respondent 3 expressed a similar view when he said:

Respondent 3: "*It will enable me to teach my students how to gather, analyse, apply and express the information related to the topic in the form of writing*."
(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 5.0.1-5.0.4)

Respondent 2 appreciated the measures taken by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) to promote the cognitive skills of the students by saying:

Respondent 2: "*The Ministry of Education encourages the teachers to prepare the students step-by-step in writing essays. This means the students have to think, draft, review and revise*."
(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 11.0.2-11.0.6)

Feedback is important in the teaching and learning process. If not for the feedback from the teachers, students would not know the mistakes they have made. So, they will continue to repeat their mistakes. Comments provided by the peer group should be received in good spirit. Feedback promotes cooperative learning. Participants mingle freely and cooperate with one another during the pre-writing stage. Respondents expressed similar views on the importance of feedback in the Process Writing. For instance, Respondent 1 mentioned:

Respondent 1: "*I have the opportunity to observe my student's performance at every stage and build up the score gradually*".
(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 11.0.1-11.0.3)

In other words, the teacher-trainee would provide comments so that his (trainee's) students could make the necessary modifications. Respondent 3 also expressed a similar view as below:

Respondent 3: "*There are stages in the Process Approach and I will have a number of students under my supervision. So, I have to Check their work at every stage*."
(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 4.0.1-4.0.4)

When the teacher educator checked the teacher trainees' work, he identified the mistakes and advised them on the corrections to be made. Since this was done at every stage, the final draft became error-free and thus the quality of writing was better. Respondent 4 also supported the other two Respondents when he mentioned:
Respondent 4: "*I can read through their drafts and give my feedback on their weaknesses. This helps them to make their presentation better*."
(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 10.0.3-10.0.7)

This means feedback helped to point out the trainees' weaknesses so that they could overcome them in the long run. Respondent 6 also added that:

Respondent 6: "*However, I made sure my students move in the correct direction*".
(Appendix V-R6 PPISMP 4.0.3-14.0.4)

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The message is that teacher trainees will be able to guide their students in school by giving feedback to make sure they do not make any mistakes during the Process Writing. Students need guidance and appreciation to improve their writing ability. Feedback plays an effective role in the Process Writing in motivating the students to improve their writing skills. The student writer needs guidance and praise at the same time accept constructive feedback. Feedback is an important technique that both teachers and students should use in order to make the writing lesson interesting and meaningful. Without feedback, students will be misled, and effective learning will not take place.

3.3 Motivation

The Respondents recognized the importance of motivation in the Process Writing. For instance, Respondent 2 mentioned:

Respondent 2: "*TESL teachers must try to create an awareness among the students as to the usefulness of Process Writing to perform well in examinations. Students must be convinced that this will also be useful in their working life*".

(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 14.0.1-14.0.6)

This amounts to saying that educators must motivate and convince their trainees on the usefulness of the Process Writing. Respondent 2 further added:

Respondent 2: "*Students do not like to spend sufficient time on writing the essay because the Process Writing is time-consuming*."

(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 6.0.1-6.0.3)

The implication is that the educators have to encourage their students to write essays even though it takes time to complete their work. Respondent 3 shifted the responsibility onto the shoulders of the teacher trainees and teachers in schools as follows:

Respondent 3: "*TESL teacher trainees and teachers in schools must be motivated to use the Process Writing Approach in English essay writing so that students could perform well in their examinations*."

(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 14.0.1-14.0.5)

Respondent 3 believed that teacher trainees and teachers themselves must be motivated in the first place so that they could inspire their students in schools to develop an interest in writing essays. Respondent 4 also felt that motivation is important to enhance the writing skills of the students. He mentioned:

Respondent 4: "*Yes, I think so. I consider the Pre- Writing stage in the Process Approach to be very useful. This is the stage where the students do brainstorming and I have the chance to discuss the topic and motivate them to generate ideas*."

(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 4.0.1-4.0.6)

Observation revealed that Respondent 6 had difficulty focusing on the writing task due to a lack of interest, but finally, he managed to complete writing the essay, which was evident in the document analysis. This reinforces the views of Respondent 3 and Respondent 4 that TESL teacher trainees and teachers in schools must inspire their students to develop an interest in writing essays. The message is that teacher trainees realized their students had to be motivated to engage in the Process Writing. Respondents 2, 3 and 4 agreed on the importance of motivation in enhancing writing skills.

Lack of motivation can lead to a lack of interest among the students. This, in turn, will lead to poor performance. However, motivation can come from two sources, i.e. from the teachers (external) and from the students themselves (internal). Teachers must encourage their students to focus on the writing activity. Moreover, they can provide examples related to the topic under discussion. They can also use audio-visual aids to arouse the students' interest. Such measures can influence the mindset of the students.

On the other hand, students must read widely to gather more information during the pre-writing stage. They must be friendly with their classmates during the brainstorming session so that the learning environment will become conducive. Teacher Trainees have expressed their views regarding the lack of motivation. For instance, Respondent 1 stated:

Respondent 1: "*Teacher Trainees themselves must specialize in the Process Writing skill while they are under training at the Malaysian Teacher Education Institutes*."

(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 15.0.1-15.0.3)

This means that the teacher trainees must become proficient in Process Writing so that they will be confident when delivering their lessons. If the teacher performs well in the class, naturally, the students will become interested in the lesson. So, the teacher factor is also important in motivating the students. Respondent 2 touched on the student factor when he mentioned:

Respondent 2: "*I think they do not have the patience. Maybe, they are used to the Product Approach*."

(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 7.0.1-7.0.3)

Students must have a positive attitude towards learning, especially, when writing essays in English. If they are committed, they will develop an interest in the long run, and the interest will contribute to motivation. Respondent 5 attributed the lack of motivation among the students to low English language proficiency. He mentioned:

Respondent 5: "*I think the Process Approach is more suitable for the weaker students*."

(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 3.0.7-3.0.8)

3.4 Evaluation Process

Teacher Trainees expressed their opinion that the Process Approach is a better evaluation process. For instance, Respondent 2 compared the Process Approach with the Product Approach, and he agreed that the Process Approach benefits his students in the evaluation process. He explained that the Product Approach evaluates the students after the writing is completed. In contrast, the Process Approach evaluates the students along the writing process from the beginning to the end. He was referring to this situation as a gradual process. He recalled how he evaluated his students through observations during the writing process. When conducting the observation, he believed in his ability to get a complete overview of their writing performance. Respondent 3 also highlighted the evaluation process. They stated that:

Respondent 2: "*Since it is a gradual process, I can coach my students throughout the process*."

(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 5.0.1-5.0.2)

"*The evaluation process in the Process Approach is better compared to the one in the Product Approach*."

(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 8.0.1-8.0.3)

"*Under the Product Approach, normally, evaluation is done at the end of writing the essay. Whereas under the Process Approach, evaluation is done at every stage through observation. So, get an overall picture of my students' writing performance. This is more realistic*."

(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 9.0.1-9.0.7)

Respondent 3: "*Observation and evaluation are done over a period of time*."

(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 10.0.1-10.0.2)

Other than Respondent 2 and Respondent 3, Respondent 4 also agreed that the evaluation process of the Process Approach is fair. He mentioned that the Process Approach allows the trainee's students to present better, as he could read their writing drafts and provide supportive feedback. Indeed, supportive feedback is necessary for improving their writing. He narrated that:

Respondent 4: "*While guiding my students [...], I can read through their drafts and give my feedback on their weaknesses. This helps them to make their presentation better. The evaluation process is fair to the student*."

(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 6.0.3-10.0.7)

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3.5 Enhanced Teaching and Learning Process

The Process Approach was enhancing the Respondents' teaching and learning process. Out of the six Respondents, five Respondents highlighted this benefit. These Respondents were Respondents 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. For instance, Respondent 1 classified the Process Approach as a systematic approach, and this approach assisted not only in improving his own writing but also in guiding him to plan well for his teaching of writing to his students. Respondent 2 also mentioned similarly. Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 stated that:

Respondent 1: "*Yes. It has helped me to improve my teaching of writing in the classroom because it is a systematic approach*."

(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 4.0.1-4.0.3)

"*It guides me to plan my teaching of writing*."

(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 6.0.1-6.0.2)

"*Well, if teacher trainees are proficient in the Process Writing, then, they will be in a better position to transfer their skill to their students*."

(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 16.0.1-16.0.4)

Respondent 2: "*Yes. It has helped me in my teaching of writing*"
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(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 4.0.1-4.0.2)

Besides Respondent 1 and Respondent 2, Respondent 4 also addressed the benefit of the Process Approach in guiding his students in writing. Other than that, he also mentioned the benefit for himself in adding more skills in teaching writing. Respondent 6 also agreed similarly. Respondent 4 and Respondent 6 stated that:

Respondent 4: "*There are five stages in the Process Approach. It is a logical development. While guiding my students, I also gain experience in teaching writing and thereby enhance my own skill*."

(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 6.0.1-6.0.5)

Respondent 6: "*I think it has helped to enhance my teaching of writing*."

(Appendix V-R6 PPISMP 3.0.1-3.0.2)

Moreover, Respondent 5 also mentioned the benefit of the Process Approach. This approach allowed him to improve his teaching practice by giving him adequate time to focus on his students. He explained that more time was needed to guide his students with low English language proficiency. He narrated that:

Respondent 5: "*It gives me enough time to teach writing to my students who have low English Language proficiency at a slow pace*."

(Appendix V-R5 PPISMP 4.0.1-4.0.3)

3.6 Discussion Platform

The Process Approach was a good discussion platform between the teacher trainees and their students during teaching practice. For instance, Respondent 1 stated that as the Process Approach is spread over a more extended period, he could discuss more with his students, particularly their weaknesses. He could also give some feedback and correct their mistakes. Besides Respondent 1, Respondent 4 also mentioned similarly. He explained that the Process Approach gave him a chance to discuss with his students regarding the writing topic. He also took the opportunity to motivate them on the idea generation. The Teacher Educator observed that Respondent 6 had some difficulty in organizing the ideas and Respondent 5 helped him. This was due to the discussion between the two group members. The advantages of discussion were also emphasized by Respondents 1 and 4 as follows:

Respondent 1: "*As the process is spread over a longer period, I have the opportunity to study the weaknesses of my students and help them to correct their mistakes*."

(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 7.0.1-7.0.3)

"*Comparatively, there is more scope for discussion and teacher feedback in the Process Writing*."

(Appendix V-R1 PPISMP 12.0.4-12.0.6)

Respondent 4: "*… I have the chance to discuss the topic and motivate them to generate ideas."*
(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 4.0.4-4.0.6)

3.7 Time Management

Time management is essential in any task. School curriculum is designed to complete teaching the syllabus within a specified period. So, teachers face the problem of completing the syllabus areas within the time limit. Moreover, teachers have to cater to the needs of the students with different levels of English language proficiency (ELP). Slow learners need more time to complete writing their essays, while their counterparts with high English language proficiency (ELP) will feel bored. Here, teachers face a dilemma with time management, such as to fulfil a management requirement or give priority to enhancing the students' writing skills. Under observation, Respondents 5 and 6 complained that the Process Approach needed more time for writing the descriptive essay. So, both the students and the teachers faced the same challenge, which is time management. This is also supported by Respondent 2 as follows:

Respondent 2: "*Conventional writing takes place faster because there are no stages involved whereas the Process Writing is slower due to the intermediate stages. So, it is time-consuming*."
(Appendix V-R2 PPISMP 10.0.1-10.0.5)

The above is true because writing needs thinking and planning. Furthermore, the Process Writing involves several stages before producing the final draft. The teacher has to check his students' work at every stage. This makes it difficult for the teacher to manage time. Kilmova (2013) also found that students demand more time to think, structure, and reflect on their ideas. So, there is justification for more time needed for the Process Writing from a Researcher's point of view. However, Respondent 3 approached this problem from a different angle when he mentioned:

Respondent 3: "*Some of the students are weak in English*."
(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 7.0.1-7.0.2)

Respondent 3: "*Although they have ideas, they are not able to express them correctly*."
(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 8.0.1-8.0.2)

As mentioned earlier, once trainee students experience problems in expressing their ideas, they tend to lose interest, and this will lead to a slower pace in writing, resulting in poor time management. Respondent 5 cited lack of interest on the part of students for failure to complete writing essays. To quote him:

Respondent 5: "*Using the Process Approach to teach essay writing needs more time and effort. I can motivate and guide the students to write the essay. However, some tend to lose their interest half-way through and do not complete writing the essay*."
(Appendix V-R5 PPISMP 5.0.1-5.0.7)

It is clear from the statement of Respondent 5 that some of the students would not be able to sustain their interest and give up their writing activity halfway through. This will affect the teachers' time management because they have to spend extra time on remedial work. Productivity is known as maximum output with minimum input within the time limit. It also reflects efficiency. However, teachers and students must cooperate to save time in completing their respective teaching and learning tasks. However, it must be admitted that time management is difficult to achieve within the context of Process Writing because basically, Process writing is time-consuming.

3.8 Idea Generation

Idea generation is fundamental in writing essays. Ideas are the result of thinking. Ideas, in turn, are conceived from reading and experience. So, a lack of idea generation affects one's ability to write essays. Students generally do not like to write essays because it is a tedious job. However, idea generation is part of the Process Writing. Students generate ideas during the brainstorming sessions.

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Respondents have expressed their views regarding the lack of idea generation. Respondent 1 stated:

Respondent 1: "*Students do not seem to have ideas relevant to the essay topic at the beginning*."
(Appendix V-R5 PPISMP 8.0.1-8.0.3)

Respondent 4 has mentioned:

Respondent 4: "*Generally students are not able to elaborate their ideas*."
(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 7.0.1-7.0.2)

However, Respondent 4 attributed lack of idea generation to the lack of mental activity as he said:

Respondent 4: "*I think idea generation lays the foundation for the Process Writing Approach*."
(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 2.0.1-2.0.3)

The Respondents were trying to mention that the teachers had the responsibility to motivate their students to search for new ideas. As facilitators, teachers have to encourage their students to look for various sources to gather information or ideas to write on the given topic. Lack of idea generation can affect the performance of the students in writing essays.

3.9 Teachers' Workload

The Process Approach increases teachers' workload. Two respondents, Respondent 3 and Respondent 4, complained about this challenge. For example, Respondent 3 said he needed to go through a number of his students' writing at various stages of the Process Approach during his teaching practice. In other words, he required more time to check their writing from the beginning until the final writing output. Indeed, this process exerted some burden on him. He narrated that:

Respondent 3: "*While it is true that it has helped my teaching of writing, it has also increased my workload*."
(Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 3.0.1-3.0.3)

> "*There are stages in the process approach, and I will have a number of students under my supervision. So, I have to check their work at every stage. In the end, there will be a lot of work for correction*."
> (Appendix V-R3 PPISMP 4.0.1-4.0.6)

Next, Respondent 4 also explained the implementation process of the Process Approach. According to him, teachers needed to focus on both academic and administrative duties. Unfortunately, the implementation of the Process Approach, which consists of various stages and requires more time, pressured the teachers. Respondent 4 stated that:
Respondent 4: "*The problem comes in the implementation process."*
(Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 13.0.3-3.0.4)

> Teachers face a heavy workload. *They have to carry out academic as well as administrative duties. So, they sometimes resort to the product method to complete the syllabus on time*."
> (Appendix V-R4 PPISMP 14.0.1-14.0.5)

3.10 Discussion

The results of the interview showed that most of the teacher trainees agreed that they had improved their writing through the Process Approach and added that the teacher educator's active involvement in guidance helped them greatly. They mentioned that they were able to improve their skills in idea organization, elaboration and word choice, which is a clear indication that they preferred the Process Approach to the Product Approach. However, the results of the interview with the teacher-trainees revealed that they had problems due to time constraints and increased workload. They had to cover the syllabus before the examinations, while corrections became an increasing workload. However, they agreed that the Process Writing can be successfully implemented if the students are allowed to write at their own pace and the critical areas of grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary are given more attention

In this study, the teacher trainees agreed on the usefulness of the Process Approach. One important aspect of the Process Approach is that it allows modifications before the final draft is written. They also shared the same view that the brainstorming session was very effective in helping them to generate ideas. They could exchange some ideas and reject others as irrelevant. Since this happens at the pre-writing stage, idea generation can be considered as the foundation for Process Writing. This is in line with the argument of Tiryakioglu, Peters, & Verschaffel (2019), that writing is a process by which students can examine and explore their ideas, create meaning and at the same time evaluate it. In a communicative approach, the teacher trainees focus on being facilitators, rather than instructors, because facilitating brings more productive results than instructing.

Teacher Trainees said that the communicative approach emphasized interaction as both the means and ultimate goal. Furthermore, they used to converse about their personal experiences with their peers and the teacher educator could teach them topics outside of the realm of traditional grammar in order to promote language skills in all types of situations. The majority of the teacher trainees agreed that the communicative approach promoted both the writing and speaking skills. It is also very important for the teacher trainees to listen to and write with the guidance of the teacher educator, as the latter is the one who may and can decide whether the required level of accuracy has been achieved. The teacher trainees expressed their views that the cognitive thinking process plays an important role in the pre-writing stage. They believed that ideas must be generated before they could be expressed in written form. The Process Writing emphasizes cognitive thinking process which plays an important role in the pre-writing stage. Rodgers (2020) also emphasized the importance of cognitive skills by saying that reflection (thinking) is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking with its roots in scientific inquiry. They further added that thinking must precede the other activities, such as drafting, revising, and editing, which could take place.

Feedback is a fundamental element of the Process Approach to writing. Feedback can be defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. In other words, it is the comments, questions, and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce 'reader-based prose' (Flower, 1979) as opposed to writer-based prose. Through feedback, the writer learns where he or she has misled or confused the reader by not supplying enough information, illogical organization, lack of development of ideas, or something like inappropriate word-choice or tense. Feedback is an integral part of the Process Approach. It is an input from a reader to provide information to the writer for revision. The teacher and students discuss possible ideas for writing. Hence, the teacher becomes a participant rather than an evaluator. This view is supported by Thomas (2017) as he mentioned that through feedback, each student can develop further the quality of his or her writing and incorporate the stages of writing. Thus, students' writing skills are developed.

Peer feedback and Conferences with students had advantages whereby the teacher educator was able to work with the trainees intensively, on a one-on-one basis or in small groups, and the teacher educator was able to know the trainees better on a personal level. The trainees had a more informal atmosphere in which to ask questions without embarrassment, and were able to receive immediate and more elaborate feedback than they would through exclusively written comments. The teacher educator and the trainees could work carefully and thoroughly through important strategies for improving their performance at all stages of the writing process, and were better motivated by the personal attention received. The teacher educator helped the trainees to establish clear and efficient goals for writing activities and for overall writing improvements.

Almost all the teacher trainees agreed that the teachers have to encourage their students to practice writing essays, though it is time-consuming. They also maintained that the learners improve their language skills through writing because it involves and requires the proper use of grammar and vocabulary. The teacher trainees suggested that teachers show interest in motivating their students. Lack of motivation can produce negative effects on the part of the students. Lack of interest and commitment towards the activity contributes to the lack of motivation. So, they have to be encouraged by their teachers to practice writing essays. Zakaria et.al. (2016) have also stated that these are the growing challenges in motivating ESL students to write essays. The teacher trainees felt that a lack of motivation could lead to a lack of interest among the students, and this in turn would lead to poor performance. However, motivation can come from two sources: one from the teachers (external) and the other from the students themselves (internal). They suggested that the teachers use audio-visual aids to arouse the students' interest. They all shared the same view, i.e. motivation needs encouragement, moral support and persuasion from the teachers.

The teacher trainees had the same opinion on Time Management. However, they pointed out that process writing is time-consuming. Students faced the problem of completing their writing assignments on time due to a

lack of language fluency. Inability to express their ideas freely and without difficulty slowed down the pace of writing. They were aware of the fact that the teachers also had to spend extra time on remedial work, and this made time management difficult. Time has to be managed efficiently. The school curriculum is designed to complete the syllabus for the various subjects within the prescribed period. Teachers have to bear this in mind when teaching writing in an ESL classroom. Hence, they have to manage time to comply with the regulation. Currently, teachers are overloaded with academic duties as well as administrative duties. They work under pressure. However, the time limit is one of the criteria in evaluating the efficiency of an employee and the teacher in this case.

Bearing the above arguments in mind, the teacher trainees said that the teachers must help their students look for ideas from various sources so that the relevant information can be gathered to write about the essay topics. When students start to write the essay, naturally, their minds will go blank. Only after thinking seriously and discussing the topic with their classmates will they get the ideas. Ideas cannot be conceived in a vacuum. Idea generation needs some reference work for certain essay topics that are related to Science and Technology. In the absence of such a reference work, students will find it difficult to write essays. Anuar & Ahmad (2016) have also mentioned that writing is a very active method that enables students to write on the basis of words and concepts to give meaning to the subject matter. The implication is that ideas have to be generated first before one can begin to write. They realized that idea generation forms the foundation for writing and that a lack of ideas will affect their performance in writing essays.

4. Conclusion

The lack of proficiency in the English language, especially in writing skills, is one of the greatest problems in Malaysian schools and colleges. In this study, the findings showed that the teacher trainees found it difficult to generate ideas at first. However, after brainstorming, they gained confidence and started writing the essay. There were improvements in the areas of idea organization, elaboration and word choice. It could also be seen that the teacher-student conferencing built the teacher trainees' confidence, and there was more creativity in their writing. Exchanging ideas helps to widen their mental horizon, and the teacher trainees could become more positive in their abilities through contact with their peers.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm their contributions to the paper as follows: Introduction, Methodology, Analysis, and Conclusion: Ramesh and Sarala; Literature Review and overall article design. Both authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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