

Writing for Professional Development: A Book Review

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Abstract:

Professionals from a variety of fields, ranging from nursing to engineering, write on the job to communicate effectively in their respective fields. *Writing to Learn the Profession and Learning to Write Professionally* are two key approaches that are brought into conversation in this book. With an audience that includes vocational education teachers, teacher trainers across the disciplines, professional training programmes, and authors of pre-professional curricula, the book's subtitle, "Creating a professional identity at work through reflective writing," could have been a good fit. As part of the latest volume in their *Studies in Writing* series, Ortoleva, Bétrancourt, and Billett bring together an international group of scholars to examine the writing skills and rhetorical sensitivities that students need to develop as they progress through the stages of their professional development. With a particular emphasis on vocational education courses in fields ranging from midwifery to baking, this book provides one of the first comprehensive examinations of what students require, what employers expect, and how teachers are attempting to assist students in better realising their professional aspirations through writing.

Keywords: Professional Development, Writing, Skills

Overview:

Through reflective writing, you can develop your professional identity. There are 18 chapters in this edited compilation, as well as a bibliography. The document is divided into three sections. This section discusses the theories and concepts that are pertinent to writing for professional growth in the first place. Section two discusses how writing can be utilised to assist students in learning the subject matter, rhetorical manoeuvres, language, and register of their chosen profession, as well as the rhetorical manoeuvres, language, and register of their chosen profession. Section three examines how writing can be used to assist students in developing lifelong learning strategies, as well as how writing about work can help students grow their professional knowledge.

They investigate how discipline-specific writing might aid students in the development of practical, conceptual, and procedural knowledge about their area in the first portion of their book. The central subject of this section is that writing can be a useful medium for on-the-job learning in a variety of situations.

Students will learn about the importance of reflective writing, collaborative writing, peer feedback, journal writing, and computer-supported instruction in preparing them for writing at work and learning at work in the second portion of this chapter. It is emphasised by the contributors that, in order for students to benefit from writing for professional development, educators must carefully create and organise appropriate writing experiences for them experiences that are founded in the specific genres of their field of study (e.g., patient treatment reports for physical therapy clinicians and scientific-technical reports for engineers). Additionally, they should have opportunities to gain hands-on experience that will assist them in learning on the job (e.g., mobile learning journals for pastry chefs, reflective journal writing for midwives, videos of themselves- in-action for physical therapists, videos of worked-out case studies for business managers). According to the authors, teachers must be strategic in their assistance and advice to students so that they understand what suitable writing goals to set for themselves.

The final segment investigates how writing on the job might aid in the development of students' disciplinary competence as well as the development of their professional identities. Contributors remind us that if writing is to be used to promote professional development and

growth on the job, researchers will need a more detailed understanding of the diverse workplaces into which students may be placed and the development of situated pedagogies that are responsive to the specific needs of those workplaces, according to the authors. Because little is known about the literacy requirements of various industries, it is difficult to create a course toward expertise.

Highlights from the chapter include: The point of view of a reader

A study by Billett, "Learning via Writing: Mimetic Processes in Action," examines the importance of observation, imitation, introspection, and rehearsal in the process of learning to write on the job, which he refers to as mimetic processes. He asserts that emulating the work of other writers can alter one's own writing and that mimesis entails taking another author's perspective, estimating his or her intentions, and producing representations of the author's goals. Students learn best via writing, he says, and teachers and mentors must scaffold experience in ways that allow students to learn through writing, particularly by experimenting with diverse genres, alone or in groups. Billet makes the important point that direct teaching and mentorship are crucial, but insufficient, in the classroom. Additionally, students must build their personal noticing skills, which will enable them to pay attention to the proper things at work and to generate new information for themselves while on the job, among other things.

In "Transforming Practice through Reflective Writing: A Discursive Approach," Vanhulle, Vité, Balslev, and Dobrowolska examine reflective portfolios created by primary and secondary school teachers in Switzerland as they created narratives about circumstances they faced while at work. They use discourse analysis to evaluate the language of teacher candidates who were developing their professional identities throughout their apprenticeships, which they conducted during the course of their research. Nejad's "Writing as a Body-Mind Performance Learning Activity for Educational Development of Wholetheme Professional Artistry," explores biofunctional science and its relationship to learning in the context of education. A model of biofunctional understanding is presented, and it is possible that this model will have ramifications for theorising incubation. Er goes on to argue that embodied cognition may be used to guide authors in professional situations, and he highlights the importance of writers practising mind-body performance. It is via the case

study of pre-service teachers who used open-ended writing prompts to critically reflect on their methods that he elucidates his views. Pereira, Pereira, and Cardoso argue in "Writing to Learn from Experience: Unguided Reflection as Meaning Making Practices for Instructors" that unguided reflective writing can serve as an effective scaffold for novice teachers participating in in-service programmes. In their research, they discovered that writing was an effective method for assisting new primary and secondary teachers of Portuguese (as well as other languages) to learn from their practises and experiences in the classroom.

Writing Reflective Learning Journals: Promoting the Use of Learning Strategies and Supporting the Development of Professional Skills" is a study conducted by Mauroux and colleagues (ages 15 to 19) in Switzerland with apprentice bakers, pastry cooks, and chefs who were encouraged to complete mobile and online learning journal as a complement to a personal recipe book throughout their training. They found that the journal helped them learn more about themselves and their work. It was discovered that writing in their online learning journal elicited apprentices' reflective capacities (e.g., "When shaping dough, be careful not to tear it"), and that guided writing prompts (e.g., "in the following recipe, I need to be careful about...") enabled students to make their experiences explicit as well as reconsider their previous and current ideas about each recipe they created. Apprentices' metacognitive awareness increased as a result of their use of reflective journals, particularly as a result of their monitoring and assessing the difficult portions of executing recipes. Students who spent more time reflecting received higher final grades.

Kurunsaari, Tynjälä, and Piirainen investigate the impact of reflective writing on the learning experiences of Finnish physiotherapy students while they are working in clinical settings in their paper "Students' Experiences of Reflective Writing as a Tool for Learning in Physiotherapy Education." They demonstrate that a significant portion of becoming a professional entails documenting one's reasoning as well as tracking the processes utilised in rehabilitation and physical therapy practices. They invited students to reflect on video records of their actions at school and at work, and they received a positive response. They discovered that students' attitudes toward writing varied significantly, ranging from "writing is a pointless task" ("since most of my time on the job will be spent talking rather than writing") to "writing is a tool for professional development" ("it's something I'll have to do as I

progress in my career as a health professional"). They come to the conclusion that teachers need more effective methods of assisting all students in recognising the potential worth of writing in their professional development and development.

A fascinating account of Australian midwifery students and their gradual professional socialisation into the practice of providing care to women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period is provided by Glover and Sweet in their paper, "Developing the Language of Midwifery through Continuity of Care Experiences." The authors monitored students over a three-year period and examined how their vocabulary about the area changed over time. They used focus groups and reflective portfolios to gather their information. Students progressed from reporting what they were doing to evaluating their actions as they gained more experience, according to the researchers. With each birth, students progressed from using common language to more specific biological terminology (for example, from saying "her waters have broken" to the more professional "her membranes have ruptured" as they documented it). A key takeaway from this study is that it may take up to three years before teachers notice changes in their students' vocabulary and comprehension of their professional culture, according to the authors. Their argument is that mastering the language of a culture is crucial because it provides dispositional knowledge—that is, knowledge of the values and attitudes, conventions, nuances, and rituals of the field—that is, knowledge of the field's values and attitudes.

A case study of a Swedish audiology degree programme and how reflective writing was used to support students' practical training in working with the hearing of children and adults is presented by Sullivan and Czigler in "Using Writing to Support Student Professional Development During Periods of Practical Training: A Case Study." They asked students to write in accordance with a model of reflection; the purpose was to make the reflection more explicit in the writing process. The reflections of the students were then graded. According to the authors, students felt limited by the paradigm and stressed by the prospect of having their reflections evaluated as part of their audiology degree. The authors come to the conclusion that it is critical to encourage the development of reflective skills in students without making them concerned about the quality of their thoughts.

Cattaneo and Boldrini examined the impact of several writing-to-learn strategies on the written reflections of apprentice business employees enrolled in a Swiss vocational education and training programme in "Individual and Collaborative Writing-to-Learn Activities in Vocational Education: An Overview of Different Instructional Strategies." In this study, they looked at three different teaching scenarios for encouraging students to engage in reflective activities. These scenarios included collaborative writing, scaffolded reflective prompts, and error detection as a means of increasing procedural learning. They put their theories about the three situations to the test in a series of well-designed experiments, and the results were encouraging. The authors discovered that students' collaborative experiences had a tendency to result in increases in their individual reflective writing skills. According to their findings, students who were given highly organised reflective prompts were able to reflect more profoundly on their professional experiences than students who were given less structured reflective prompts. They also discovered that showing students recordings of worked-out examples of improper professional procedures assisted students not only in diagnosing more procedural difficulties than students who viewed correct procedures but also in explaining how and why such errors may have been avoided. Their work demonstrates the importance of self-explanation in the context of professional development learning.

"Computer-Supported Collaborative Writing for Professional Development," written by Ortoleva and Bétrancourt, examines the manner in which computer networks might assist in the development of abilities acquired while working. According to the writers, professional growth can be an alienating experience, and they address the need of receiving social support when participating in learning activities. It is suggested that asynchronous online dialogues (e.g., blogs, e-portfolios, and listservs) can be used to create communities of practice that promote individual professional development. As they co-constructed decisions about their professional lives, they saw and recorded the collaborative talks of teacher education and health-care students in action. They discovered that utilising wikis helped some students feel less alone during their learning, but that others preferred to work alone and were hesitant to utilise wikis in the first place. The level of interaction that took place online proved to be critical. As suggested by the authors, teachers should alternate between moderating structured online discussions that focus on varied responses and moderating structured online talks that result in agreement and consensus. Neumann examines whether students across the European

Union are truly trained on texts that are appropriate to their professional growth in "Professional Text Genres: Writing Standards in Vocational Education." She raises three problems about vocational education in Germany, which are as follows: (1) Is it true that secondary schools educate kids for writing in their future professions? (2) What types of genres are appropriate for use in the workplace? as well as (3) Do students' competencies at graduation correspond to the expectations of employers? She discovered that schools, particularly those at the Gymnasium level, were doing an excellent job of preparing pupils for college. She noticed that teachers tended to place a greater emphasis on oral communication at the expense of written communication (e.g., talking to customers over the telephone instead of the more frequent task of writing an email). Perhaps not unexpectedly, she discovered a misalignment between what firms sought from students and the abilities that students possessed at the time of their internship. "Learning to Write as a Professional: Engineers and Health Professionals in the United Kingdom and Germany," an article published in the journal "Learning to Write as a Professional," Breuer, Newman, and Newman conducted a study of engineers and health professionals from the United Kingdom and Germany to determine their professional education. Their findings revealed that new writers could learn the professional register of their industry (for example, genre-specific language), but they were unable to recognise the rhetorical manoeuvres of certain genres within their field, according to the authors. They discovered that German schools placed a strong emphasis on term papers, whereas UK schools placed a strong emphasis on essays, proposals, and design briefs. They come to the conclusion that there were too few genres taught, and that little feedback was provided other than end-of-paper marks. Surprisingly, in other situations, when students arrived at the workplace unprepared to write on the job, employers appeared to be unconcerned about their situation. They described a German engineering company that did not want its employees to participate in their study because they feared that participants would come to realise that they required improved communication skills and would then demand training that their supervisors were hesitant to provide. Employers believed that being a competent engineer meant being excellent with statistics rather than being good with language. "Teaching Writing in Australian Vocational Education and Training Contexts: The Need for a New Professional Development Approach and Commitment," written by Kelly, is motivated by survey findings that consistently show

that approximately half of Australian adults need to improve their language, literacy, and numeracy skills, among other things. These poor literacy levels have had a negative influence on the workforce's ability to be productive. As a result, the Australian government provided funding for initiatives aimed at improving the tools available to language and literacy teachers. A review of resources available to writing teachers of engineering students was conducted by the author, who came to the conclusion that they were neither up to date nor reflective of current research. She advises that real workplace texts be integrated with evidence-based recommendations from current research in literacy and functional linguistics in order to create better resources for trainers in order to improve their effectiveness.

According to Woodard's article "Becoming Brave Writers and Writing Teachers: Teachers Recognizing Emotional Dimensions of Writing and Transforming their Classroom Instruction," research on the function of affect and emotions in writing should be conducted more thoroughly. Using case studies of teachers from elementary, middle, and high school classes in New York City, she demonstrates how they participated in writing groups that were designed to inspire instructors to reflect on their own writing and on their students' writing. The author looked into the emotions that the teachers were experiencing while they wrote, shared their writing, and instructed in writing. Writing had a transformative effect on the practises of all three teachers, who were more vulnerable in their classrooms as a result of writing alongside students and revealing their personal writing processes. We must consider how creating an identity as a professional educator, which includes emotions and feelings about what it means to be a writing teacher, is an important part of becoming a writing teacher, the author says in his conclusion.

According to Ray Smith's article "Researcher Professional Development through Writing: A Negotiation Perspective," over an 18-month period, he conducted a case study with 12 employees who were involved in ordinary on-the-job responsibilities. As a researcher, he then concentrated on his own writing process (writing up the case), arguing that writing may be utilised to assist create one's professional identity while also promoting one's personal development. The ways in which being a researcher entailed navigating the personal and professional worlds, setting personal standards for research quality, and expanding

understandings of the scientific criteria by which research is judged are all described in detail by him.

Researchers Badenhorst, Joy, Penney, Pickett, Hesson, Young, McLeod, Vaandering, and Li investigate the importance of reflective practice in assisting rookie academics in navigating the challenges of becoming a professional in "Becoming an Academic: Reflective Writing and Professional Development." The authors looked into how novice faculty developed coping mechanisms as they forged their professional identities at a Canadian institution, which they found to be quite interesting. Over a five-month period, participating faculty members met once a week to participate in a writing group in which they reflected on their experience of "becoming an academic." The writing group, according to the authors, enabled novice faculty to reflect on the shifting boundaries between personal and professional life, work and home life, and novice and expert status. The weekly writing group provided a secure space for professors to hear each other's stories and allowed members to express feelings that are not generally expressed in academic environments.

Grant provides a case study with two South African accounting students who cooperated on a report regarding their university's environmental practices in "Constructing Professional Communication Identity through the Final Client Deliverable: The Multimodal Investigation Report." The author concentrated on the development of students' visual and verbal texts with the goal of understanding their decision-making and semiotic choices as they created the text, tables, and images for the project. It was via the use of discourse analysis that the author was able to closely examine students' final reports, following their textual and graphic movements as well as their evolving sense of professional identity.

Because so few contributors were familiar with the literature on professional writing, information design, and technical communication — all of which are pertinent to the field of writing for professional growth — there is a limitation to the scope of the book's coverage. This body of study may have enhanced authors' ideas regarding writing in the professions— providing richer source materials from which to debate issues such as the ones listed below, for example:

- Genres for professionals (Bhatia, 1993; Boettger, 2014; Freedman & Adam, 1996; Miller, 1984)

- Multimodality, information design, and visual communication are all important concepts in today's world (Carliner, 2000; Malamed, 2009; Schriver, 1997; 2012)
- Perceptions of mistakes made when writing on the job (Gray & Heuser, 2003)
- Developing rhetorical abilities for writing in the workplace (Katz, 1998; Savage & Dragga, 2000)
- Making the transition from school to the job can be difficult (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Beaufort, 2000)
- Workplace cultures are important (Henry, 2000; Schriver, 2015)
- Unfortunately, there are also issues with editing and design on both a macro and micro scale that must be addressed.
- Problems at the macroeconomic level. However, the three sections of the book (which were briefly mentioned in the introduction) are not indicated in the table of contents of the printed ebook, and this should be corrected. The three portions are not addressed at all on the Brill Online website, which is another disappointment. The flat hierarchy given in the table of contents is deceptive, as it obscures the various emphases intended by the editors as well as the relationships between the various chapters. At the most fundamental level, the reader is unable to distinguish between the end of one part and the beginning of the next.

It is difficult to grasp the big picture because there are no standardised chapter abstracts or overviews to refer to. The writers did create overviews for their chapters, which are available on the Brill Online website, but these have been strangely omitted from the final printed version of their book. Potential book purchasers will not be able to examine a single PDF file including all of the abstracts if they are using the online edition. To access the abstract, one must first navigate to a separate page for each of the 18 chapters and then click on it. These bad information design and user interface decisions result in a painful reading experience for the reader, whether they are reading the paper version or the online version.

Even the release date is inconclusive, with the online version of the book being published in 2015 and the ebook being published in 2016. When other researchers attempt to mention the work as a result of this, the system becomes clogged with needless noise. There is no index of

names. For a book with 382 pages, the subject index is less than two pages long, which is quite short. It's a real shame.

There is no biographical or contact information about the contributors, and readers are encouraged to browse the Internet to learn more about where the authors are from and what they do. These omissions not only detract from the readability of the text, but they also impede readers from becoming acquainted with the authors and their body of work.

Problems at the micro-level. There are numerous errors and spelling issues throughout the text. Some of the mistakes include words that run together, ugly page breaks, unnecessarily long paragraphs, incorrectly written names in references, and line breaks at random in the references.

Inconsistent formatting of tables and graphs is seen throughout the chapter, even within the same section. Some tables are distributed over two pages without a signal that they are to be continued; in fact, the first page of such tables typically has too much blank space at the bottom of the page, which signals the end of the table rather than its middle; and some tables are distributed over two pages without a signal that they are to be continued.

When taken together, these macro-and micro-level issues result in a reading or browsing experience that is less than gratifying. Furthermore, the errors of omission and commission lead one to question how much time and effort was put into editing this book about professional writing in the first place. It is at the authors' peril when academic books overlook the editing and design characteristics of the text; they may end up alienating the very readership that the authors have worked so hard to recruit.

The collection's strongest points

This book contributes to our understanding of the power of written reflection as well as how self-assessment can pave the way for situational learning to take place in the classroom. In my opinion, the variety of cases in this book is pretty interesting, and I believe that readers interested in literacy and writing studies more broadly will find this book to be of interest because it highlights how writing can make a difference in people's professional lives. The book provides strategies for preparing students for the transfer to the world of work, as well

as for further growing their communication skills and discipline knowledge while on the job, as well as for further building their own professional development.

Students can acquire sensitivity to crucial qualities of their profession through reflective writing, which motivates them to pay attention to relevant characteristics of their work and generate new knowledge for themselves while on the job, according to the contributors to this volume. It gives evidence-based explanations of professional development and the ways in which reflection can help to promote purposeful learning in a variety of settings. The book demonstrates how writing can assist students to transform their understanding of respective disciplines through introspection and action, as demonstrated in the examples provided. Additionally, the stories offered in this book demonstrate unequivocally that pupils' knowledge transformation does not occur overnight. The evidence of self-reflection and consolidation of learning may not appear for several years after students have completed their coursework.

Despite its stylistic and information design flaws, I found this book to be enjoyable and thought it deserved to be shared with you. For many years, teachers and scholars have discussed the role that writing can play in enculturating students into their respective disciplines, but much of this discussion has been abstract and lacking in specifics and complexity. This book can assist us in moving beyond generalisations about writing to learn on the job and into a more detailed understanding of some of the specific ways that writing can support professional growth and expertise, as described in the title.

Insights into the pedagogy

When all of the chapters are considered together, a number of important conclusions concerning teaching and learning can be reached. The following observations regarding writing for professional growth are likely to be shared by the contributors to this volume:

The process of learning occurs not only in the formal classroom, but also informally as we interpret our experiences and create knowledge from them. As learners participate in what Schön (1983) referred to as "the marshy trenches of the world of practise," effect and motivation play a crucial role in their development.

There is no single writing prompt that will encourage student thought; rather, the most successful prompts are structured and open-ended rather than close-ended in nature. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, do a better job of prompting thought on problems and actions than closed-ended inquiries. Students may be able to deal more effectively with unknown zones of the swamp if they reflect on their experiences (Schön, 1987).

Students will not reflect on their writing efforts unless they are purposely planned, structured, and spaced, with enough scaffolding and feedback along the way. There is no single sequence of writing tasks that will motivate students to reflect on their actions. Teachers can still play a significant role in encouraging Schön's notion of reflection-in-action, if they choose to do so.

The adoption of professional "insider" language by students serves as an essential indicator of their professional progress. A person's progress in learning a professional language can be seen and quantified scientifically. Discourse analysis and computational linguistics are both excellent methods for tracking the development of a language.

Students may be unable to articulate what they believe to be appropriate aims for their written work (Wallace & Hayes, 1991; Hayes, Flower, Schriver, Stratman, & Carey, 1987). They may see their purpose as only creating error-free material rather than delving into professional concerns or challenges related to their field. It is possible for teachers to intervene at various stages of the writing process to assist students in developing personal goals for their writing. Teachers can also assist students in distinguishing between writing goals for personal growth and writing goals for composing texts on the job.

The ability to write and design in a professional setting, as well as familiarity with common business genres, are expected by employers of students entering the workforce. Teachers can play a significant role in providing students with opportunities to practise business genres and in raising students' awareness of the expectations that employers have for their writing, visual design, and oral communication abilities. Teachers should also gain a better understanding of why certain characteristics of writing are valued more highly by organisations than others (e.g., clarity, concision, and correctness).

When learning to write on the job, it is possible that practising the imitation of professionally written workplace texts may be beneficial. By emulating good examples, students can gain a basic understanding of conventions, style, and grammar. Meanwhile, they must learn to

recognise the features of poorly written texts in their subject; this will enable them to more effectively identify flaws that may creep into their own writing.

Teaching professionals are generally in agreement with the fact that competent professional writing is a complicated cognitive, social, and cultural practise. It is necessary, however, for teachers to have more detailed information about how writing actually occurs in workplace contexts, particularly whether people write alone or together in groups; see, for example, Leijten and Van Waes (2007) and Hayes (2007) for more information (2014).

What this book does well is to bring to light the need for evidence-based explanations of how writing can mediate students' professional development—both personal growth within their chosen sector and growth as a team member while they are on the job. The contributors of this book get off to a great start in laying out tactics and approaches for encouraging and measuring students' personal and professional development.

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