

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND



REFINING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS FOR THE THIRD-YEAR BCOM (ACCOUNTING) STUDENTS AT A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Sphelele Khomo, CA(SA)

(BCom, BAcc – University of Witwatersrand)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education in Research Methodology (CW)

Mini-Dissertation

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Student number: **201860872**

Supervisor: **Prof MM Nkoane**

Co-Supervisor: **DR TP Mngomezulu**

DECLARATION

I, **Sphelele Khomo**, declare that the dissertation, '**Refining academic writing skills for third year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal**', submitted for the qualification of Master in Education in Research Methodology at the University of Zululand, is my own independent work.

All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

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(Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Website: <http://www.unizulu.ac.za>
Private Bag X1001
KwaDlangezwa 3886
Tel: 035 902 6731
Fax: 035 902 6222
Email: DlaminiA@unizulu.ac.za

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Certificate Number	UZREC 171110-030 PGM 2018/539									
Project Title	REFINING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS FOR THE THIRD YEAR BCOM (ACCOUNTING) STUDENTS AT A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN KWAZULU NATAL									
Principal Researcher/ Investigator	S Khomo									
Supervisor and Co-supervisor	Prof MM Nkoane					Dr TP Mngomezulu				
Department	Educational Psychology and Special Education									
Faculty	Education									
Type of Risk	Med Risk- Data collection from people									
Nature of Project	Honours/4 th Year			Master's	x	Doctoral			Departmental	

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

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- (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date- 04 October 2019]
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The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.


Professor Gideon De Wet
Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation
04 October 2018



P. O. Box 7376

EMPANGENI RAIL

3910

11 February 2020

Cell: 072 347 0662

E-mail: MncwangoEM@gmail.com

Confirmation of Editing

This serves to confirm that I proof-read and edited a Master's dissertation, titled:
'REFINING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS FOR THE THIRD-YEAR BCOM
(ACCOUNTING) STUDENTS AT A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL',
for S. Khomo.



Dr E. M. Mncwango (D. Phil)

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the academic writing contests experienced by the third year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Most of these students are second language users of English, and the language is used as a medium of instruction. This study was informed and guided by the following research questions that were drawn from the objectives of the study: (i.e. Why do the third year BCom (Accounting) students seem to have challenges with academic writing skills?; What are the perceptions of BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third-year BCom (Accounting) students to develop the academic writing skills?; and, Are the academic writing programmes effective and efficient to assist third year BCom (Accounting) students to develop academic writing skills?) The study used the qualitative research approach and interpretivism paradigm. The theory that underpinned this study is social constructivism. The participants comprised two groups of students and third year lecturers. Interview Focus Groups with both the students and the lecturers were conducted, analyses of tests and projects/programmes were employed as data collection instruments. Eighteen (18) students and six (6) lecturers were interviewed. Thirty-three (33) tests and fifteen (15) group projects were analysed by the University Writing Centre. The content data analysis was adopted, and it revealed the following: it is not easy to understand the content in a second language, the accounting students are not passionate about academic writing, the students are displaying linguistic challenges, some of the accounting lecturers need academic writing skills training for them to be able to train the students, the lecturers and the students are not using the writing format and are failing to follow the writing process. This study recommends the following: The Writing Centre should develop an academic writing skill programme at first- year level, and this should be embedded within and across different academic modules. This will enhance students' academic writing skills, academics and the Writing Centre support-team could collaborate in assisting students.

Keywords: Academic writing, accounting lecturers, accounting students, second language

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my late mother, Kilter Mantu Sangweni. Thank you Mom for all the love and support, I will always love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have many people to thank for the successful completion of this Master's degree. First of all, I would like to thank my husband, Mlethwa, and my daughter, Sbonga, for allowing me to do the Master's degree at the expense of the family time. I would like to thank my assistant, Maphumu, who took care of my family when I was not available.

Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisory team consisting of Prof MM Nkoane (main supervisor), Dr TP Mngomezulu (co-supervisor) and my fellow teammates in the class of 2018 for their input and guidance. I am grateful to Prof MM Nkoane for the guidance and patience in introducing me to the world of academic research - he patiently held my hand throughout the process.

Thirdly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the students that participated in this study, my colleagues who are teaching at third year level and my colleague from the writing centre (Yoliswa Mgobhozi). I would also like to thank the whole Department of Accounting and Auditing team who have always held my back and were willing to carry my workload sometimes so that I could focus on my studies.

Above all, I would like to thank my Heavenly Father for always carrying me through and showering me with success.

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CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on refining academic writing skills for the third year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal. It seems that the third year BCom (Accounting) students have challenges with academic writing skills. Generally, they are number oriented as most of the activities they do throughout their studies revolve around calculations. In addition, at the beginning of their careers, at an entry level, they are expected to perform functions that have to do more with calculations. The accounting students are lectured by accountants who are also number oriented and, as a result, there are clear plans of developing the calculation skills. However, it is unclear whether the curriculum in place has adequate activities to develop academic writing skills that they need to have in order to succeed in their professional life.

Writing is one of the means of communication that uses visual words, which are meant to be read with understanding. Writing may be either in print or digital form. Further to that, it allows individuals to communicate a message either to a small group of people or a larger audience than is possible in face-to-face and telephonic conversations.

Possessing a good writing skill helps in terms of communicating a clear message, whereas a poor writing skill may send an ambiguous message which would lead to misinterpretation and more likely create a negative impression. People are not born with good writing skills, instead a writing skill is learned and mastered over time through reading various documents, text books, newspapers and also choosing a writing style of a particular person and practise it over and over again until you become good at it. Those with good writing skills are more likely to succeed in school and in the workplace (Biscontini, 2014).

Academic writing refers to the style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their specific areas of expertise. The first step to writing academically is to clearly define the purpose of writing and identify your readership or target audience. Academic writing is to some extent: complex, formal, objective, explicit, hedged and responsible. When someone communicates ideas in writing, he/she usually does so to express himself/herself, inform his/her

readership, to persuade a reader or to create literary work. For students, writing is usually used to communicate what the student knows, therefore, it is critical that the student writes in a way that will convince the reader/assessor/ marker that the student knows the particular topic in question.

In South Africa, most accounting professionals have limited or no exposure to one important component of academic writing, which is academic research. This is caused by the fact that they do not write research papers and articles for the purposes of presenting these at conferences or for publication in accredited journals or book chapters in their undergraduate studies. In addition, most undergraduate Accounting programmes have no research methodology component. Therefore, this could be one of the contributing factors to the academic writing challenges faced by the third year BCom (Accounting) students. Academic writing plays a critical role in the second/foreign language skills development (Mubarak, 2017).

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

This study adopted a Social Constructivism theory. According to (Kim, 2006), Social Constructivism emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding. (Au, 2005) argues that in Social Constructivism school literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds will be improved as educators address the goal of instruction, the role of the home language, instructional materials, classroom management and interaction with students, relationships with the community, instructional methods and assessment. She further indicates that knowledge is actually constructed or developed by humans.

Language and writing systems are the cultural tools that are developed and are available to people in different societies. Learners of diverse backgrounds should be encouraged to use their home language skills as the basis for developing literacy in schools. In the Social Constructivism learning environment, teachers are not to leave learners to their own devices, but they (teachers) are to appraise what is important for true understanding of the content and move among the learners to assist with strengthening the quality of learners' constructs. The teacher's role is to support the learners to make ideas and practices of the learning community meaningful at their respective individual levels.

(Kim, 2006) states that there are four general perspectives that inform how we could facilitate the learning within the framework of Social Constructivism, namely: cognitive tools perspective, idea-based Social Constructivism, pragmatic or emergent approach, and transitional or situated cognitive perspectives. In cognitive tools perspective the emphasis is on the learning of cognitive skills and strategies while the idea-based Social Constructivism focuses on science, mathematics and literature. Pragmatic or emergent approach asserts that the implementation of social constructivism in class should be emergent as the need arises. Furthermore, she states that transactional or situated cognitive perspectives focus on the relationship between the people and their environment.

(Au, 2005) argues that the school literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds can improve as educators recognise the importance of students' home languages and come to see biliteracy as an attainable and desirable outcome. Schools are the sociocultural settings where teaching and learning take place and where "cultural tools" such as reading, writing, mathematics and certain modes of discourse are utilised (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). This theory assumes that theory and practise do not develop in a vacuum, they are shaped by dominant cultural assumptions. Teachers should use forms of assessment that reduce sources of and reflect learners' literacy achievement. Social constructivists actually view learning as a social process and knowledge as a human product.

In 2005, Au stipulates that from a Social Constructivist perspective, there are five explanations for the literacy achievement gap to appear. They are as follows: linguistic differences, cultural differences, discrimination, inferior education and rational for schooling. He further indicates that both success and failure of the literacy learning are the collaborative social accomplishments of school systems, communities, teachers, students and families. In constructivism, communication or discourse processes are compared to process of building. The emphasis is on generative acts, such as those of interpreting or composing texts. Themes in constructivist work include active engagement in processes of meaning-making, text comprehension as a window on these processes and the varied nature of knowledge, especially knowledge developed as a consequence of membership in a given social group (Au, 2005). Social Constructivism included the idea that there is no objective basis of knowledge claims, because knowledge is always a human construction. The emphasis is on the process

of knowledge construction by the social group and the inter-subjectivity established through the interaction of the group, (Mogashoa, 2014).

Social Constructivism is informed by the following philosophical stances: Ontology – social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity, reality cannot be discovered, it does not exist prior to its social intervention; Episteme – that knowledge is a human product, and it is socially and culturally constructed. Individuals create meaning through interactions with each other and with the environment they live in; and Axiology - Learning is a social process: It does not take place only within an individual, nor is it a passive development of behaviours that are shaped by external forces. Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities.

As a justification for choice of this theory, this theoretical framework appears to be the most relevant to the phenomena under investigation. The focus of this study was to examine how third year BCom (Accounting) students construct knowledge, and their academic writing skills.

1.3 BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Interaction through the written message is the goal of writing. Motivating students to write is actually a challenging task for the teacher, but it should not be viewed as rocket science. Decades of observations make teachers to understand that student aptitudes vary widely in writing. Many students do not actively participate in writing activities due to their lack of fluency in expression, insufficient lexical command and poor grammatical accuracy. Writing is a complex skill. A piece of writing becomes meaningful when it conveys the intended message to the reader.

Writing requires many skills, some of them being the ability of the writer to recall appropriate words and put them in sentences with appropriate sentence connectors and sequence signals, evaluate the significance of a word or a sentence in the overall context of the written passage and use the form and register appropriate for the subject matter and the audience. Many a times the students fail to produce reasonably intelligible pieces of writing due to higher levels of apprehension. The main aim of developing the skill of writing is to train the student in expressing himself or herself effectively in good English. If students are to write spontaneously, opportunities to acquire confidence in writing must be provided to them (Babu & Rao, 2018).

Different studies of Norwegian undergraduate students reveal that students are struggling to meet the requirements of academic writing, and that they, to a small extent, benefit from the ordinary writing instruction they receive. This paper also presents results from a study on lecturers' literacy. The findings are compared and some conclusions drawn on what kind of training programmes lecturers need to upgrade their literacy (Jonsmoen, 2013).

Effective writing is a skill that is grounded in the cognitive domain. It involves learning, comprehension, application and synthesis of new knowledge. Writing encompasses creative inspiration, problem-solving, reflection and revision that results in a completed manuscript. Whatever the reasons may be, the bottom line is that the majority of students do not possess the skills necessary to effectively communicate in a written format that will enable them to become successful upon graduation (Defazio, Jones, Tennant & Hook, 2010).

Enhancing English language proficiency, especially academic writing ability at postgraduate level, is the precondition to promote and extend research work in the universities in Pakistan. It is observed that traditional English language courses based on general English cannot cater for the needs of the university students for research writing as the majority of postgraduates do not indicate any writing ability, especially academic writing needed to promote research activity in Pakistan (Sajid & Siddiqui, 2015). Students bring academic or technical writing anxiety into the classroom. The findings of this study suggest three main reasons or causes of writing anxiety: (1) Lack of confidence in writing ability, (2) Lack of time to devote to writing activities, and (3) Lack of skills in utilising scholarly resources. Participants also suggest that colleges or universities take more proactive steps in implementing strategies early in the matriculation process to support graduate students in acquiring writing competency (Holmes, Waterbury, Baltrinic & Davis, 2018).

There has been a growing concern by lecturers of the declining standards of writing being displayed by university students in the recent past. The principles of good writing are no longer adhered to and issues such as grammar, punctuation, choice of vocabulary and sentence structure, are generally not of the required standards. The ability to achieve communicative competence in writing is an essential element in language development and academic success among students at all levels of the

education ladder. However, many students at the university have exhibited challenges in their academic writing skills and this is evident in the assignments and terms papers that they write (Wanja, 2018).

The barriers to academic writing that were identified by (Itua, Coffey, Merryweather, Norton, & Foxcroft, 2014) include lack of time and confidence, lack of extended writing at FET level, lack of reading and understanding of academic texts or journals, referencing and academic jargon. Academic writing plays a critical role in socialising students into the discourse of subjects and disciplines in universities. Many students, especially those in many South African universities, are struggling to maintain academic writing standards that are acceptable in higher education (Pineteh, 2014).

According to (Chokwe, 2013), there are a number of factors that contribute to poor academic writing skills amongst first year university students. These factors include under-preparedness caused by ineffective teaching of writing at school level, socio-economic issues and inadequate reading. Consequently, these factors affect the quality of student writing at tertiary level. Students under-preparedness tends to be perceived as a student problem. Several researchers argue that the problem of student writing is also exacerbated by teaching staff members who are at times under-qualified, underprepared and inefficient. To address academic writing difficulties, lecturers or tutors should also see themselves as active participants in the process by making sure that they are fully equipped and trained to help students with academic writing skills.

In addition, it is clear that schools play a critical role in developing students' reading and writing skills. If student writing is not addressed adequately at school level, the higher education sector will always be inundated with students who are academically under-prepared. Academic writing should not be relegated to one department (English) or to academic literacies centres but should be a joint effort of both language and discipline specialists. Socio-economic factors contribute negatively to student learning, particularly academic writing.

Poor student writing cannot only be attributed to the poor schooling system but also to universities, because in South Africa, universities took up the role of Teacher Training after Colleges of Education closed down. Hence, academic staff from universities should take responsibility and also contribute in addressing students' academic writing

problems. Though it will be a difficult exercise to embark on, higher education institutions should endeavour to correct what the schooling system failed to do by designing effective writing programmes that will catapult students to contextual academic discourses within their respective disciplines as well as effective teacher training.

Chokwe's study acknowledges that in order to address student writing difficulties, a holistic approach is needed and it has to start from elementary education through to higher education where writing intensively becomes an integral part of the learning outcomes. Academic staff should also get themselves involved in teaching and transferring academic writing skills to students because in some instances, specific discipline-related writing problems will require subject-specific interventions which language specialists do not have. Writing cannot be discussed in isolation from reading.

The biggest challenge is that there is little synergy between what happens in high schools and what happens in tertiary education. The high school curriculum contributes very little to the tertiary education curriculum, particularly in the teaching of writing. This gap needs to be addressed (Chokwe, 2013). Academic performance is said to be strongly influenced by one's academic writing (Maher, 2011). It is clear that a plan to develop academic writing skills should be developed and be incorporated in the curriculum design for third-year BCom (Accounting) students. This will assist students to develop academic writing skills.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It seems that the third year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in Kwazulu-Natal are challenged with academic writing skills and this seems to affect their academic performance. In general, Accounting students are good with calculations and they are challenged with academic writing. This is based on discussions on different platforms such as South African Institute of Chartered Accountant (SAICA) meetings and workshops.

Writing well is really a big challenge for both native and non-native students. In general, it is much bigger with the students of English as a foreign language. Students nowadays have very little interest in writing which is so important to fulfil the education requirements. This may be due to technology progress which has its negative effect

on student's skills of writing because of the availability of the ready-made assignments (Muslim, 2014). Writing can be defined as an articulation of thinking, an act of choosing among an array of modes or forms, some involving words (Wagner, Hilger, & Flash, 2014).

Academic writing plays a critical role in socialising students into the discourse of subjects and disciplines in universities. Many students, especially those in many South African universities, are struggling to maintain academic writing standards that are acceptable in Higher Education (Pineteh, 2014). Academic writing is important for students in order to master the English language and to be able to learn other disciplines where English is used as the language of instruction (Alharbi, 2019). Writing is viewed as a thinking tool, a tool for language development, critical thinking and learning in all disciplines (Alharbi, 2019).

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The aim is to refine academic writing skills of the third year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives that inform the study are as follows:

- To determine challenges of the academic writing skills faced by the third year BCom (Accounting) students.
- To explore the perception of the BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third year BCom (Accounting) students.
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the current academic writing skills programme or projects in the curriculum for BCom (Accounting) students.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.6.1 Overarching research question:

How can academic writing skills for third year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in Kwazulu-Natal be refined?

1.6.2 Subsidiary questions

The subsidiary questions are as follows:

- Why do the third-year BCom (Accounting) students seem to be challenged by academic writing skills?

- What is the perception of the BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third-year BCom (Accounting) students to develop the academic writing skills?
- Are the academic writing programmes or projects effective and efficient to assist the third year BCom (Accounting) students to develop academic writing skills?

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study is located within a qualitative research method as the researcher would like to understand the causes of the challenges with academic writing skills that are faced by the third-year BCom (Accounting) students.

1.7.1 Research paradigm

The study used the interpretative paradigm. The assumption for the interpretative paradigm is that reality should be interpreted through the meaning that the research participants give to their life world.

1.7.2 Research design

A case study research design was adopted. According to (Bromley, 1990), a case study research is a systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events which aims to describe or explain the phenomenon of interest. (Yin, 1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

From an interpretivist perspective, the typical characteristics of case studies are that they strive towards a comprehensive (holistic) understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study. A case study research design seemed to be appropriate for this study as it assisted the researcher to understand and interpret the data with regard to the case of academic writing skills challenges of third year BCom (Accounting) students.

1.7.3 Sampling

The stratified purposeful sampling method was adopted when sampling the students, because students were chosen on the basis of the level of marks achieved. For example, students who acquired marks between 0-49 formed one group and those between 50 – 100 marks formed another group.

All the third year lecturers were interviewed.

1.7.4 Data collection

The study used an open-ended unstructured group interviews with open – ended questions and analysis of the documents. The group focus interviews were conducted on six (6) BCom (Accounting) third - year lecturers and twenty-five (25) students. Additionally, twenty - five (25) test scripts and a project report for the same cohort of students were analysed with a view to finding the level of academic writing skills among students.

The focus group interview strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of response, activating forgotten details of experience and realising inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information (Maree, 2012: 90).

1.7.5 Data analysis method

Qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretative philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. It tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon. This is best achieved through a process of inductive analysis of qualitative data where the main purpose is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by a more structured theoretical orientation (Maree, 2012: 99).

A content qualitative data analysis was adopted. This is a process of looking at data from different angles with a view to identifying keys in the text that will help us to understand and interpret the raw data. It is also an inductive and iterative process where we look for similarities and differences in text that would corroborate or disconfirm theory (Maree, 2012: 99).

1.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The use of reliability and validity are common in quantitative research and now it is reconsidered in the qualitative research paradigm. Since reliability and validity are rooted in positivist perspective, they should be redefined for their use in a naturalistic approach. Like reliability and validity as used in quantitative research are providing

springboard to examine what these two terms mean in the qualitative research paradigm, triangulation as used in quantitative research to test the reliability and validity can also illuminate some ways to test or maximise the validity and reliability of a qualitative study. Therefore, reliability, validity and triangulation, if they are relevant research concepts, particularly from a qualitative point of view, have to be redefined in order to reflect the multiple ways of establishing truth (Golafshani, 2003).

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I have read the university's policy and procedures on research ethics and its policy and procedures on managing and preventing acts of plagiarism, and I understood the content. My supervisors and I have considered and discussed the ethical issues that may arise from this research, and these are dealt with below. The ethical issue that could have arisen is that the participants were students and lecturers were under the leadership of the researcher, therefore, the researcher might have used her position to influence the views of the participants. This risk was mitigated by the researcher completing the necessary compliance forms.

1.10 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

Writing is a means of communication that uses visual words, which are meant to be read and understood. Writing may be either in print or digital form and allows individuals to communicate the message to a larger audience than is possible with face-to-face and telephone conversations. Good writing clearly communicates a message whereas poor writing may cause misinterpretation and create a negative impression. People are not born with good writing skills, these skills must be mastered through study and practise. Those with good writing skills are more likely to succeed in school and in the workplace (Biscontini, 2014). *Writing* is a medium of human communication that represents language and emotion with signs and symbols.

Academic writing is conducted in several sets of forms and genres, normally in an impersonal and dispassionate tone, targeted for a critical and informed audience, based on closely investigated knowledge, and intended to reinforce or challenge concepts or arguments.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social Constructivism theory is the theory that informs this study. The study focuses on refining academic writing skills for third-year BCom (Accounting) students. In this chapter discussion of theoretical framework and literature review will be considered. Firstly, the theoretical framework will be discussed and after that we will attend to the literature review. Under the literature review we will be responding to three objectives and each objective has three constructs. The three objectives are to determine challenges of the academic writing skills faced by the third-year BCom (Accounting) students, to explore the perception of the BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third-year BCom (Accounting) students to develop academic writing skills, and to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the current academic writing skills programme or projects in the curriculum for BCom (Accounting) students.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The theory that is adopted in this study is Social Constructivism. Social Constructivism is the theory of teaching and learning (Mogashoa, 2014). It is also the theory on how knowledge is socially and culturally constructed. The belief in this theory is that reality is constructed (Trudy, 2016). For knowledge to be constructed, there must be an interaction between people (Walker, 2015) and, as a result, language is key as people have to interact with one another. A person constructs knowledge from prior experiences and interaction with other people and environment (Mogashoa, 2014). Espoused by Vygotsky, Social Constructivism emphasises the importance of social context, given that 'student construction of knowledge is the product of social interaction, interpretation and understanding (Howard, 2017).

2.3 HISTORICAL ORIGIN / EVOLUTION OF THE THEORY

Social Constructivism was first developed during the enlightenment. Its modern origins stem from the work of classical sociologists such as George Herbert Mead and Emile Durkheim, psychologists such as Jerome Bruner, and educators such as Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky, among others. Despite its critics, Social Constructivism is used in many academic and practical fields. Among common areas studied by contemporary social constructivists are ways to develop effective teaching methods for a diverse society, how gender, class, and other social variables impact

human knowledge, media effects, perceptions of social status and appropriation of culturally valued kinds of knowledge, and even its application to art, among many others (Mercadal, 2018).

Social Constructivism was further developed by Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky) who was a revolutionary Soviet psychologist. Vygotsky was a cognitivist, but rejected the assumption made by cognitivists such as Piaget and Perry that it was possible to separate learning from its social context. He argued that all the cognitive functions originate in (and must therefore be explained as products of) social interactions and that learning did not simply comprise the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners, it was the process by which students were integrated into knowledge community. Every function in the child's culture development appears twice: first, on the social level (between people-inter-psychological) and, later on, on the individual level (inside the child-intrapsychological), (UCDP, 2018).

According to Vygotsky, semiotic mechanisms mediate social and individual functioning and connect the external (social) and internal (individual). Semiotic mechanism can include any number of cultural tools, language, symbol systems, calendars, processes, art, maps, writing, writing utensils, technology, and machinery, essentially any tool, tangible or symbolic, that human use to adapt and thrive within the context of their environment (Kay & Keble, 2016).

In the social sciences, Social Constructivism is sometimes also known as social constructionism, with which it shares many elements as an umbrella term that covers different related theories, and which draws upon a wide variety of disciplines and philosophies, these include ethnography, sociology, anthropology, feminism and others. It studies how people learn and gain knowledge. It understands that individual and group identity positions, such as gender, ethnicity and race, are built with a structure of social relations, which in turn condition how knowledge is acquired and world is understood. In short, social constructivism focuses on the nature of knowledge and how it is created (Mercadal, 2018). Social constructivism developed as academics attempted to understand, in the face of a vast cultural diversity worldwide, how people form worldviews and perceive reality (Mercadal, 2018).

Vygotsky emphasised the role of language and culture in cognitive development. He emphasises that language and culture play essential roles both in human intellectual development and in how we perceive the world, and claimed that they provide frameworks through which we experience, communicate, and understand reality (UCDP, 2018). Vygotsky (UCDP, 2018) believed that learning takes place within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this, students can, with help from adults or children who are more advanced, master concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own. According to (Charles, 2018) the Zone of Proximal Development is defined as a range between the comfort zone and the fight-or-flight zone.

There are two Developmental Levels of ZPD:

- The level of actual development – point the student has already reached and can problem-solve independently; and
- The level of potential development (ZPD) – the point the student is capable of reaching under the guidance of teachers or in collaboration with peers.

The ZPD is the level at which learning takes place. It comprises cognitive structures that are still in the process of maturing, but which can only mature under the guidance of or in collaboration with others.

Zone of Proximal Development

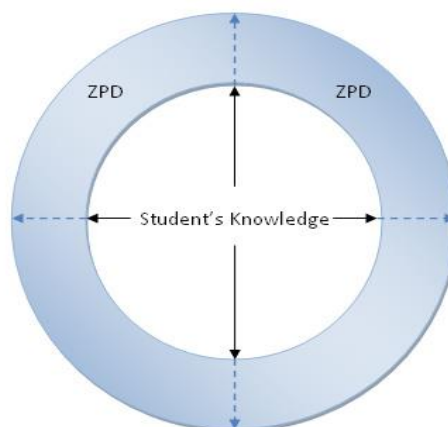


Figure1: Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Inner “white” circle: what the student can learn unaided; and *Outer crust “blue circle”:* what student can learn with help of significant others. **ZPD:** area of ‘potential’ where learning takes place.

To ensure development in the ZPD, the assistance/guidance received must have certain features:

- *Inter-subjectivity* – the process whereby two participants who begin a task with different understandings arrive at a shared understanding (Newson & Newson, 1975). This creates a common ground for communication as each partner adjusts to the perspective of the other.
- *Scaffolding* – adjusting the support offered during a teaching session to fit the child's current level of performance. This captures the form of teaching interaction that occurs as individuals work on tasks such as puzzles and academic assignments.
- *Guided participation* – a broader concept than scaffolding that refers to shared endeavours between expert and less expert participants

According to (Kay et al., 2016), there are two levels of learning described by Vygotsky. These are actual development of learning whereby the learner can be able to do a task without any assistance from someone with more knowledge and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is a level whereby the student needs support from a more knowledgeable person. There have been recent reforms in education where the educators are still implementing the principles of learning and development as presented in Vygotsky's work. Educators have implemented differentiated instruction models as one approach for dealing with increasingly diverse student population in the typical classroom.

These differentiated instruction approaches consider and accommodate students' backgrounds, languages, readiness levels, interests and learning profiles (Kay et al., 2016). Social Constructivism in eLearning, instructional design has taken into account in recent years the developments in the usage of technology. As a result, there is an online collaboration between distance students via, for example, email, messaging, video conferencing, and digital sharing platforms (King, 2018).

2.4 OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

2.4.1 Scaffolding of the knowledge

Scaffolding of knowledge is key. The higher the knowledge gap, the more scaffolding is needed. The support that is given to students should be reduced as the students are more equipped and they have developed more skills (Mutimani 2016). According to (Kay et al., 2016), knowledge must be scaffolded according to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that has been identified. It is critical that the lessons are split into small chunks and be spread accordingly so that the students are not overloaded.

2.4.2 Involvement of More Knowledgeable Other(s) (MKO)

The main focus on Social Constructivism is the role that the social interaction and social processes play in knowledge creation (Draper & Macleod, 2013). It is critical to involve the more knowledgeable other to assist with the development of a skill for a less knowledgeable other. Student profile is key so that the student can be allocated those knowledgeable others who will possess the necessary skills (Kay et al., 2016). Where two or more participants are involved, knowledge should be created. Collaborative learning is emphasised in Social Constructivism and the results of collaborative learning are massive.

Through collaborative learning, students are able to develop creativity and higher level thinking skills. Social Constructivism maintains that while it is possible for people to have shared meanings which are negotiated through discussion, it also acknowledges that no two people will have exactly the same discussions with exactly the same people. To this extent Social Constructivism allows multiple realities to exist (Draper et al., 2013).

2.4.3 Acknowledgement of prior knowledge

Participants in the social engagement should have prior social experience in order for the meaningful construction of knowledge to take place (Draper et al., 2013). People do not receive knowledge as if they were empty vessels. According to Social Constructivism nothing is learnt from scratch (Kay et al., 2016), but the student embeds new ideas within old. Therefore, the Social Constructivist student's view of the world will be subjective (Draper et al., 2013). Assessment of prior experience

assists the lecturer to identify the ZPD which is the area the lecturer should focus on in order to assist the students to develop the skills that they cannot develop without the assistance of the more knowledgeable other.

2.5 HOW THEORY INFORMS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS

The social constructivist is attentive to the voice of the participants (Sandu, 2017) and all parties are equal. The researcher cannot be separated from the research. Research findings will be constructed through the interaction between the researcher and participants. Therefore, research findings are constructed and not discovered (Maree, 2012).

2.6 PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

2.6.1 Ontology of Social Constructivism

Ontology – social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity, reality cannot be discovered, it does not exist prior to its social intervention. Ontology is a nature of reality, and according to (Busse, Humm, Lubbert, Moelt, Reibold, Rewald, Schluter, Seiler, Tegtmeier, & Zeh, 2015), ontology is a science of being. Ontology is also an attempt to recognize the world of things and facts in all-encompassing ways and to categorise and name everything. In Social Constructivism, nature of reality is constructed and developed through human activities (Mogashoa, 2014). The world is a product of negotiating the meaning that the social actors attribute to the social phenomena, and the meaning that the individuals assign to the world may differ from one social actor to another, but the process of deconstruction-reconstruction of meanings makes individuals identify common meanings of the terms by which the social reality is defined (Sandu, 2017).

2.6.2 Epistemology of Social Constructivism

Episteme – that knowledge is a human product, and it is socially and culturally constructed. Individuals create meaning through interactions with each other and with the environment they live in. Epistemology is a belief about the nature of knowledge (Moshe, 2019). In Social Constructivism, knowledge is socially and culturally constructed through the interaction of people (Beaumie, 2012).

2.6.3 Axiology of Social Constructivism

Axiology - that is, value in this theory is about learning which is a social process: it does not take place only within an individual, nor is it a passive development of behaviours that are shaped by external forces. Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities (Moshe, 2019).

2.7 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The purpose of the study is to refine the academic writing skills for third year BCom (Accounting) students. Social Constructivism theory is relevant in this study as it is the theory of teaching and learning. Therefore, this theory is going to guide the lecturer and the student on how the academic writing skills can be socially and culturally constructed. The main emphasis of this theory is the social interaction between the student and the person with more experience/knowledgeable other (MKO) so that the learner can be able to learn from him/her and develop. The more knowledgeable other in this case can be the lecturer or the peers. The identification of the knowledge gap (ZPD) is key in Social Constructivism theory. The identification of the knowledge gap (ZPD) in this study will assist the Lecturers to scaffold the academic writing skills activities so that the learner can be able to develop these skills in a progressive manner. Therefore, Social Constructivism theory is relevant for this study.

2.8 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature in this study is reviewed against the background of objectives and research questions that inform the study, and constructs that were developed. Themes guiding the study were identified based on the research objectives and also drawn from research questions in this study and each theme has constructs. These themes are: challenges of the academic writing skills; assisting the students to develop academic writing skills and current academic writing skills programme and/or projects in the curriculum of students.

2.8.1 Challenges of the academic writing skills

The challenges of academic writing skills have been addressed through three constructs, which are writing in a second language, diverse culture and linguistic background, and different linguistic challenges faced by the students.

2.8.1.1 Writing in a second language

It seems that academic writing in a second/foreign language is a major challenge faced by many students at both secondary and tertiary levels. According to (De Silva, 2015),

displaying content knowledge and understanding of a subject through a second language is a very complex process. Academic writing at the university level has been a challenge especially for English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) students (Alharbi, 2019). Several researchers have pointed out that students in universities lack not only the required English language proficiency, but also the knowledge of academic writing that hinders their academic progress (Alharbi 2019).

2.8.1.2 Diverse culture and linguistic background

The contributing factor to challenges in academic writing practises is due to diverse academic, culture and linguistic background (Singh, 2016). Transferring information from one language to another is a challenge as it might take longer to find vocabulary for the language you are transferring the information to (Singh, 2016). Students that are studying in a second language are faced with their rhetorical and cultural writing patterns in their home language (native language). It is argued that the rhetorical patterns depend on each language and culture, and these differences might make it more challenging for the students to relate to the new writing conventions (Hasan & Mustafa Naci, 2015). The style of writing for the first language could pose a challenge when a student is writing in second language in a case where the writing style of the second language is different from that of the first language (Kim, 2017).

2.8.1.3 Different linguistic challenges faced by the students

According to (Hasan et al., 2015), the following challenges were listed when the assessment was done in one of the workshops i.e. self-doubt; insecurity; intimidated to start; struggling to get ideas; struggling to accumulate material; lack of academic writing skills; fear of critique; and lack of confidence. Novice writers could experience difficulties as they are embarking on the academic writing process as it is a messy process, this messy process entails writing and rewriting until the ideas are formulated (Holmes et al., 2018).

In some cases, the writing process is not clearly defined and some of the knowledge is expected to be common knowledge to the student. This is frustrating from the perspective of the student as this puts a lot of pressure (Jeyaraj, 2018). Second language writers are seen to be producing written work that is substandard, sometimes this could be the case when there has been no explicit writing instruction (Holmes et al., 2018). The continual challenge for students to express themselves in writing could

lead to loss of creativity in academic writing (Muslim, 2014), And this might affect the discipline-specific subjects where academic writing might be the key to success.

Some of the challenges faced by the students are paragraphing, ideas, grammar, spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Students seem to be struggling to link the academic writing to academic learning and future professional practise due to lack of understanding of the guidelines and professional criteria from the lecturers. As a result, the students are spending a lot of time trying to identify requirements, norms and rules of academic writing (Jonsmoen, 2013).

The barriers that were identified by both students and lecturers are time management, low confidence, lack of comprehending academic jargon and poor referencing (Itua et al., 2014). Prior education experience by students has a role in how the student develops academic writing skills. Government policies that require funding to be distributed on the level of pass rates have a negative bearing on the teaching and learning strategies that are implemented by the teachers/lecturers as the educators start focusing more on teaching to test so that they can achieve higher pass rates, and sometimes this happens at the expense of good quality education.

Academic writing is considered to be challenging because of the process that the student has to go through such as identifying the topic, developing support for the topic identified, organising the writing, revising and editing to ensure the writing is free from errors (Mubarak, 2017). The other challenge is that several components such as correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, appropriate vocabulary and suitable style must be considered. Sometimes the student is overwhelmed to address all this at the same time. Some of the challenges are caused by shortage in the English language curricula, dreadful teaching methodologies, lack of appropriate language development environment and lack of motivation from the students.

According to (Pospelova, 2016), some of the challenges faced by the students stem from interlingual errors of interference from the native language, intralingual errors within the target language, the sociolinguistic context of communication and psycholinguistic or cognitive strategies. The increase, specifically of international graduate students, has brought to light the writing challenges experienced by the

second language students. The challenges faced by these students related to grammar, vocabulary, organisation and flow of ideas, critical thinking, and plagiarism (Ravichandran, Kretovics, Kirby, & Ghosh, 2017).

According to, (Pospelova, 2016), students are most often weak at producing coherent and cohesive paragraphs, lack appropriate argumentation, inaccurate use of grammatical structures and lexis. Some of the international students studying in an English second language had challenges with academic writing process, and the challenges highlighted are as follows (Singh, 2016): identifying what to write, expressing ideas, linking ideas, sequencing, organising the assignment and issue of clarity in writing.

In one of the studies in the US, it was indicated that the English Second Language students experienced isolation, lack of belonging and unfair perceptions or underestimation of their academic ability (Swathi, Mark, Kara, & Ankita, 2018). Some graduates were not comfortable to speak to native students due to language deficiency. In one of the studies, the results showed that students committed several errors that were categorised into syntactic, morphological, lexical, lexico-grammatical, spelling and punctuation.

Students are not keen to read quality academic books and journals, the students prefer to use technology and source the information from sources such as the internet. The challenge is that some of the information sourced from the internet is light (Itua et al., 2014). Lack of academic reading leads to poor academic written work since academic reading is key to good academic writing. Students are struggling with paraphrasing; they tend to copy the literature verbatim. Some students have an academic writing anxiety due to lack of confidence, lack of exposure in academic writing and lack of skill (Holmes et al., 2018).

According to (Sajid et al., 2015), many schools do not produce pupils that are proficient in the English language as they are expected to do so. Private school pupils seem to be doing better than the public school pupils. This has a negative bearing in the academic writing skills at tertiary institutions. There seems to be a disjuncture between the academic writing practitioners and the discipline specific subject lecturers, this lack

of collaboration undermines the importance of developing academic writing skills by the students (Esambe, Mosito, & Pather, 2016).

In one of the Kenyan universities, lecturers expressed concerns about the declining standards of writing displayed by their students (Wanja, 2018). The main issues were that students were not following principles of good writing such as grammar, punctuation, choice of vocabulary and sentence structure. In addition, the students could not develop an argument and they are failing to demonstrate critical thinking in their arguments. Factors that might influence these students are first language writing ability, second language proficiency and writing experience in both languages. In addition, second language academic writing errors may be caused by the cognitive and social factors. It is likely that the errors will be higher if the structures of the first and the second languages are different.

The use of social media is posing a challenge as some of the students do use an instant messaging style in academic writing. According to (Pineteh, 2014), the poor schooling system and massification of Higher Education in South Africa has contributed to students that are facing academic writing challenges. Inadequate schooling infrastructure resources such as library, under-qualified teachers and socio economic factors such as the poor family background (no education experience and education kept for the elite) contribute to the academic writing challenges faced by the South African students (Chokwe, 2013). Lack of reading also contributes.

The third-year BCom (Accounting) students are English second language students and the majority of these students are the product of the poor South African education system and they are from poor family backgrounds. Some of the students are the first generation to enter Higher Education institutions. These students do resonate with most of the challenges stipulated above, and this is apparent in the theory questions in the tests and examinations, where these students are expected to exercise their academic writing skills. In most cases the Accounting students answer the number based questions well and battle to answer the theory questions that require academic writing skills.

There is a cry in the South African Accounting profession at the moment due to the low pass rate in 2019 of the Part Two of the Board examination, particularly for African students who are mainly English second language speakers. It is suspected that one of the reasons for such a low pass rate is low level of English proficiency and this has a negative impact on the academic writing skills of these students. The format of this examination has changed, it demands more academic and report writing skills.

2.8.2 Assisting the students to develop academic writing skills

Three constructs which are preparedness of academics to develop academic writing skills, preparedness of students in developing writing skills and intervention by the language expert, have been identified.

2.8.2.1 Preparedness of academics to develop academic writing skills

Some of the academic writing skills development approaches might not work due to discipline lecturers lack of emphasis or preparedness in communicative teaching (Hasan et al., 2015). Discipline lecturers have challenges with giving students clear instructions and constructive feedback on the written work (Singh, 2016). Discipline lectures are responsible for assisting students to develop academic writing skills, and where necessary, they should develop academic writing workshops or courses that will help the students (Singh, 2016). When an academic writing course or workshop is designed the needs of the student must be considered so that this intervention will yield the desired outcome of developing academic writing skills (Alharbi, 2019).

According to (Strauss, & Grant, 2018), some of the discipline lecturers wanted to assist the students to develop academic writing skills but they (lecturers) did not know how to do it. However, some lecturers do not think it is their responsibility to assist students with the development of the academic writing skills. Lecturers are responsible for investigating what students are struggling with in order to assist them (students) to deal with their struggles (Wanja, 2018).

Lecturers should give students more academic writing tasks so that the students can have an opportunity to practise. Lecturers might not have a clear picture of how to communicate the writing instruction due to their own challenges in giving academic writing task (Jonsmoen, 2013). There are lecturers who are giving general feedback that does not assist the student to know exactly where he/she needs to improve. In some cases, it was discovered that some of the lecturers do not have adequate

academic writing skills, hence, they are challenged to give clear instructions to students and to give constructive feedback.

Some discipline-specific lecturers do not feel competent to teach academic writing skills (Itua et al., 2014). Lecturers should train themselves in error correction so that they will be able to give constructive feedback to students. There must be a clear plan in the design of the course by each lecturer of how error correction will be dealt with. Errors provide feedback to the lecturers because they are reflective of the effectiveness of the teaching material and teaching approach used. This feedback should be incorporated in the revision or future lessons (Pospelova, 2016). Some discipline specific lecturers are not confident to teach academic writing as they are concerned that they might not be fully knowledgeable about the subject (Mostert, & Townsend, 2018).

It seems that the accounting lecturers are not trained to provide academic writing skills and as a result they have to attend the academic writing training so that they can be able to train the students. These lecturers should work with the linguistic expert in order to develop the academic writing training skills. The lecturers should motivate the students to improve the academic writing skills as this will benefit the students both academically and at the work place. The students are not aware of what is expected of them at the work place so lecturers should share these and invite the practitioners to come and speak to the students about the skills required for them to succeed at the workplace, especially communication skills which include writing skills. In a study done by (Riley, & Simons, 2013), communication skills (oral and written) ranked in the top 5 skills that an Accountant should possess.

2.8.2.2 Preparedness of the students in developing academic writing skills

A student that has developed great academic writing skills is likely to be successful in a professional career as good writing skills are required by the industry (Strauss et al., 2018). The development of the academic writing skills should be embedded in the discipline specific content as this is seen to be effective (Strauss, 2017). Discussion should be held with discipline-specific lecturers so that they can embed what has been learnt in the academic writing course in the discipline specific content (Hathaway, 2015).

It is critical to ascertain students' views of the development of academic writing skills, otherwise, if students' expectations are not addressed, there could be resistance in learning. Academic writing instructions should be tailor-made to the needs and expectations of the students. Students should be given an opportunity to participate in choosing the topic, this might improve the level of participation in the academic writing task as they will not feel that they are being dictated to (Hasan et al., 2015).

Academic writing skills should be embedded in the curriculum as a requirement as opposed to being a support cause as this has a transformative benefit. The argument is that all students need academic writing skills training (Hathaway, 2015). An academic writing skills course must not be seen as a remedial or compensation tool, however, it should be seen as a developmental tool that will take the student to the next level (Hathaway, 2015). Academic writing skills should be developed in the early years (Muslim, 2014).

Lecturers should provide feedback on students' written work, and the teaching and learning environment must be conducive for language development (Wanja, 2018). Feedback that is given to a student must be positive and negative so that the students' self-esteem can improve, otherwise, if the student is only given negative feedback he/she might be discouraged and lose interest in the development of the academic writing skills. Lecturers should assist the students to develop strategies for self-correction and regulation.

Using the latest technological resources could enhance the teaching and learning. Lecturers should motivate students to read academic texts and encourage them to work with their peers who are more acquainted with the discourse. The students must spend more time in practising academic writing skills, this will result in the improvement of their academic writing skills. The universities must have a clear plan of how they will assist students that have a language challenge.

Students must be given feedback on what they have done and where necessary, where and how they can improve (Jonsmoen, 2013). Lecturers must improve their academic writing skills so that they will be able to give clear instruction and constructive feedback to students. The writing process steps such as planning,

organising, presenting, re-writing and proofreading should be followed (Pospelova, 2016). An academic writing course should be developed.

Lecturers should be careful when choosing the teaching and learning method and select the method that will drive the correct behaviour of students. The teaching and learning method should incorporate the development of the academic writing skills especially for the second language students (Itua et al., 2014). Tutors should be allocated to academic programmes so that they can deal with the discipline-specific academic writing skills. In addition, the language staff and discipline-specific staff should collaborate and develop a programme that will assist the student to develop academic writing skills (Swathi et al., 2018).

Students should be encouraged to participate in the social groups and have relationships with native students as this will help with the development of the English language. The list of social group should be prepared and communicated to the English Second Language students. Feedback on writing should be given to students, different drafts must be reviewed and feedback given to students before the final report is submitted. Group activities could be given to students so that students can have an opportunity to engage and, as a result, the academic writing skill will improve.

A meeting should be held between the lecturers and the teachers to share some of the feedback from the students so that teachers can address some of the challenges at the school level. The school curriculum should be aligned with the Higher Education curriculum so that the transition between these two curricular is manageable (Itua et al., 2014). Academic support is important in assisting the students to develop academic writing skills (Dowse & van Rensburg, 2015). Collaboration between different stakeholders (students, lecturers and linguistic expert) could be a useful tool in assisting students to develop academic writing skills.

At first, academic writing training should be performed by the discipline specific lecturers, where possible, with the assistance of the linguistic expert. This will help the discipline-specific lecturer to develop the academic writing training skills, as a result, the lecturer will gain confidence. Different teaching and learning approaches should be tried so that different learning styles are catered for (Mostert et al., 2018).

Collaboration between high schools and the Higher Education is critical so that the expectation gap is addressed. Students in higher education are expected to have developed academic writing skills, as a result, the lecturers get frustrated when they discover that this is not the case (Chokwe, 2013).

2.8.2.3 Intervention by the language expert

The discipline-specific lecturers should take the responsibility of providing academic writing training to their students- -, this responsibility should not be left in the hands of the linguistic expert. These lecturers should seek assistance from the linguistic expert in order to train their students well (Hathaway, 2015).

Instituting a group for the students to work together to do a project could be beneficial to students as this will bring the opportunity for peer review before the final document is submitted and the students could give each other emotional support. It is recommended that the groups be supported by knowledgeable academics that can be able to provide guidance or train where necessary (Wilmot, 2018).

2.8.3 Current academic writing skills programme and/or projects in the curriculum of students

Three constructs have been identified and there are activities in the curriculum for students to develop academic writing skills, best practices of academic writing skills programmes or projects and attempt to address academic writing skills.

2.8.3.1 Activities in the curriculum to develop academic writing skills

Academic writing skills development should take a priority in Higher Education due to its practical application in the academic tasks such as tests, examinations, assignments, essays, projects, theses and dissertations. Good academic writing skills contribute to the growth of the research endeavours. Some students do feel that the good academic writing skills will add value in their future careers. Practising writing improves the level of proficiency (Hasan et al., 2015). Academic writing skills development must be spread over a lifespan of the curriculum. Discipline-specific lecturers should take responsibility and provide support to students. However, these lecturers should be given the support (Wagner et al., 2014).

(Hathaway, 2015) argues that all students, whatever their linguistic identities, can benefit from an explicit and structured introduction of academic writing. It is important to include the training of the academic writing skills in the curriculum as opposed to

offering it as an extra voluntary training. This approach is transformative. Some students that are studying towards vocational or professional qualification indicate at the beginning of their studies the lack of interest in the academic writing as they do not see how it will add value to their careers (Strauss et al., 2018). These students struggle with the structure of the assignment or report that they are preparing. The lecturers should motivate these students and make them see the importance of academic writing.

Some of the accounting lecturers feel that there is no space for the course on the development of academic writing skills in the curriculum as the curriculum is already at its maximum offering capacity. Some of the students also share the same sentiment with their lecturers as they sight time management to be a challenge due the work that they already have. There is a need to review the accounting curriculum to ensure that communication skills, particularly academic writing skills, are catered for in the curriculum.

A lot of studies in countries such as United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and China have shown that communication skills training, particularly academic writing, has to be incorporated in the accounting curriculum, and some of the practitioners highlighted that there should be a sacrifice of the technical content in the curriculum so that a space for communication skills is opened (Simons et al., 2013).

2.8.3.2 Best practices of academic writing skills programmes or projects

Structures such as the Writing Centre is provided by some institutions. Sometimes the Writing Centre is seen as a place for helping students with writing problems. This could be discouraging as they are not seen as places where academic writing skills can be developed (Hathaway, 2015). Some students are not keen to seek help for academic writing activities as they are scared to be seen as stupid. These students indicated that they feel that they are expected to have academic writing skills (Strauss et al., 2018). Academic support centres should be set up to provide such support for the development of academic writing skills (Singh, 2016).

Some discipline lecturers see Writing Centres (student learning centres) as places for students with poor English as opposed to places that can help students to develop

their communication skills such as academic writing skills. As a result, they do not encourage students to get help and some of the students are not even aware that these places exist because they are not advised to get help (Strauss et al., 2018). According to (Wanja, 2015), another strategy that the institutions can use is to establish an Academic Writing Centre where students can be guided and supported in the writing process.

The role of the Writing Centre is to assist students to cope with various assignments such as writing essays, term papers, research projects and dissertations. The student is given the support throughout the writing process from formulating a topic, developing an argument, structuring one's sentence and paragraphs to editing and proofreading one's paper before submission. The Writing Centre should be open to all students and it must also provide trainings, writing workshops, essay writing competitions and conferences. Some students feel that a Writing Centre is not useful as the focus is more on the correction of the language as opposed to constructive feedback on the content as some of the Writing Centre staff might not be familiar with the discipline (Swathi et al., 2018). In some universities in the Asian countries a Writing Centre plays a critical role in equipping the students with academic writing skills (Kim, 2017).

Academic Writing Centre team may collaborate with the students and lecturers in order to address the academic writing skills challenges (Dowse et al., 2015). There should be planned activities that the students should take to the Writing Centre and it must be compulsory to submit these particular activities to the Writing Centre (Itua et al., 2014). This will encourage the students to attend to the development of the academic writing skills. Resources must be made available to students (Holmes et al., 2018). A Writing Centre should be created so that the students can get the assistance they need (Pineteh, 2014).

There should be a collaboration between the accounting discipline-specific lecturers and the Writing Centre staff in giving activities that will assist the student to develop the academic writing skills. The student should be given the support by both parties. There must be a collaborative effort from both parties to assist the student. The Writing

Centre must not be seen by the Accounting lecturers as a scapegoat to solving the academic writing skill challenges of a student.

2.8.3.3 Attempt to address the academic writing skills

Where necessary, the curriculum should be redesigned in order to cater for the needs of the English Second Language students so that these students can be able to improve their academic writing skills (Swathi et al., 2018). An orientation programme in improving academic writing skills, feedback from written projects and use of technology tools should be considered.

The following different approaches have been used to develop academic writing skills (Hasan et al., 2015):

- **Product-based approach**

The focus of product-based approach is to develop grammatical accuracy which entails the language structures, sentence patterns, table substitution and essay development with particular attention to introduction, body and conclusion structures. Students learn how to write by learning the rules of writing.

- **Process-based approach**

The focus of the process-based approach is the process that students go through during the writing process. Students (writers) formulate ideas as they are writing. Feedback from different reviewers gained prominence in this approach which helped students to identify and address the writing skills challenges. Students learn how to write by writing.

A workshop or course should be developed to help second language students to develop academic writing skills. Students should participate in the classroom teaching and learning activities such as brainstorming sessions, discussions and presentations (Singh, 2016). They should be trained on spelling and punctuation, grammar, organisational skills to write the topic sentence and on developing vocabulary (Alharbi, 2019). Writing should be taught as a process (pre-writing, writing and post-writing). This process entails brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and editing (Alharbi, 2019). It is important to note that academic writing is a difficult and complex task,

therefore, it takes time and effort to develop this skill. It is, therefore, important that academic writing lessons are spread throughout the curriculum so that the students can be given adequate time to learn this skill instead of covering every academic writing techniques in one course (Alharbi, 2019). Academic writing skills improves as the student is practising (Wanja, 2018).

The assessment of academic writing projects is critical, there are five aspects that need to be considered and there are: fluency –sentence structuring and vocabulary, content – ability to organise ideas and writing coherently, ability to use standard conventions –correct spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, grammar and readable handwriting, vocabulary use and syntax – ability to use variety of sentence patterns and constructions. In addition, the purpose, process and product of the written project must be taken into account.

It is important for lecturers to give feedback to students on the academic writing exercises. Lecturers should give more academic writing exercises as this will result in an improved academic writing skills. Lecturers should help students to understand that it is the students' responsibility to improve poor writing skills and lack of competency in English. Students must be made to understand that developing the academic writing skills will take a lot of time and effort.

Students should be trained on arranging paragraphs by using robust style of word structures, paraphrasing and appropriate conjunctions (Mubarak, 2017). Some students feel that interacting with the first language speakers will assist in improving academic writing skills. Higher Education institutions and schools should work together to ensure that the English curriculum is spread appropriately from the school level so that when students enrol at a university, they have accumulated some of the academic writing skills. Students should be given time to self-edit their work. This minimises the rule-based errors which can easily be addressed in a short time. The non-rule-based errors such as word collocations, correct choice of words, coherence or developing argumentation take longer to develop as they require a lot of practice (Pospelova, 2016).

Formulating peer writing groups for students might alleviate the isolation feeling by the students. This group might assist with review of the written work and sharing of ideas before the final document is submitted (Jeyaraj, 2018). A clear plan of how the student will develop academic writing skills and clear instruction on the responsibility of the lecturer who will be reviewing the work must be communicated. Providing constructive feedback on the essay is critical, this helps the student to develop academic writing skills. Clear guidance and instruction should be given to students so that the students are clear on what is expected of them (Esambe et al., 2016).

It is crucial for lecturers to take time to understand the calibre of the students so that they can design the curriculum accordingly. In South Africa, the baggage of the past system is still raising its ugly head. This is demonstrated in the poor quality of academic work produced by the students that comes from poor South African households, particularly written work. Collaboration of the linguistic lecturers, discipline specific lecturers and students is key in the development of the academic writing skills (Pineteh, 2014).

Incorporating academic writing training in the curriculum and starting the training at the inception of the programme will help the students to gradually build academic writing skills. Clear writing instructions to students must be provided so that they can focus on what is needed (Holmes et al., 2018). Introducing intervention measures at the school level could reduce the academic writing challenges faced by the students when they reach Higher Education (Millin, & Millin, 2018).

Some students feel that doing similar academic writing activities such as essays in their mother tongue (first language) could help with the development of academic writing skills in a second language (Hasan et al., 2015), therefore, it is important for these students to give feedback to the school they come from. The students feel that teachers should consider other cultures. It is clear that a clear academic writing training strategy should be developed so that the students can be able to develop academic writing skills. The responsibilities must be clearly defined and distributed amongst the different stakeholders such as the linguistic expert, discipline specific lecturer, Writing Centre and students. In addition, high school teachers must be given feedback on what is expected from the students when they join a higher learning

institution, as this will ease the pressure from the students when they join the institution of higher learning.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the theory that underpins this study which is Social Constructivism and the objectives of the theory which are scaffolding of the knowledge, involvement of More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) and acknowledgement of prior knowledge. This chapter also discussed and explored literature related to the study objectives, namely to determine challenges of the academic writing skills faced by the third-year BCom (Accounting) students, to explore the perception of the BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third-year BCom (Accounting) students and to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the current academic writing skills programme or projects in the curriculum for BCom (Accounting) students. The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology adopted in the study. It outlines the research methodology, research paradigm, research design, and describes the target population, sampling procedures, data collection, instruments and data analysis. The ethical consideration adhered to in this study will also be discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research methodology is a systematic plan of how the research project is undertaken – that is, what research method is employed, what paradigm is used, and what data were drawn from third-year Bcom (Accounting) students and their lecturers using focus group interviews, and what analysis of test scripts and projects was undertaken with the help of the writing centre of the university.

This study has adopted a qualitative research method. Qualitative research method is aimed at understanding social life, human behaviour and the meaning that people attach to it (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, 2013). Qualitative approach is used to answer questions about the complex phenomena, with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant's point of view.

In (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2013), it is stated that in (Creswell, 2007: 37-39), the following characteristics of qualitative research were identified:

- The qualitative researcher tends to collect the data at the site where the participants experience the phenomena;
- The qualitative researcher becomes the instrument in the study as the researcher collects the data himself or herself through examining documents, observing the behaviour and interviewing the participants;
- The qualitative researcher learns about the views the participants hold about that particular phenomena;
- The qualitative researcher gathers multiple forms of data; and
- The qualitative researcher develops a holistic view about phenomena.

Therefore, qualitative research method is appropriate in this study as the researcher has an urge to examine the complex causes of the poor academic writing skills experienced by the third year BCom (Accounting) students.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study used the interpretivism paradigm. The aim of the interpretivists is to gain an in-depth understanding of why a particular group of certain people behave in a particular way and this requires the researcher to have a direct contact with this group in order to understand their behaviour (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The researcher wanted to gain an understanding of why the third-year BCom (Accounting) students are challenged with academic writing skills, therefore, the interpretivism paradigm is suitable for this study.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study research design was adopted. A case study is a study of an activity or a particular group of people with similarities or who share a similar goal whose ideas or voices can be put together to give a meaning about a phenomenon under study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). A case study research design seemed to be appropriate for this study as it assisted the researcher to understand and interpret the data with regard to the case of academic writing skills challenges of third year BCom (Accounting) students.

3.5 TARGET POPULATION

The target audience for this study were both Third year BCom (Accounting) students and their lecturers at a university in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, South Africa. The third-year Bcom (Accounting) students were targeted as sampling units of this study because they are still faced with academic writing skills while the assumption is that they should have improved based on the period of time spent at the university. Moreover, they have sat in quite a number of assessments prior to their third-year level of study. As a result of the earlier reasons, they should have overcome and fine-tuned this skill in the preceding levels of study.

(Dickson, 2016) argues that there are six ways of improving academic writing skills, namely: encourage good writing; work on your student's mind-set; a lot of practise equals better performance; provide instructions throughout the writing process; provide helpful feedback, and have your students read a lot.

(Dickson, 2016), asserts that writing is a complex skill that a majority of students actually require in order to progress academically at university. This is so in need, because everything at university is centred on writing. As a result, a student who possesses good academic writing skills will perform relatively better at everything, including examinations, essays, assignments, and so on.

Further to this, she argues that a teacher should be at the centre of the education of students. However, she recognises the fact that students cannot improve their academic writing skills without working hard and having a desire to make progress. A teacher can definitely get involved and make huge differences concerning this matter. Her advice is that teachers should follow these tips if students are to achieve significant improvements in their writing skills.

Therefore, it was critical to target both the students and lecturers in this study as they are both expected to have an experience of the challenges faced by the third-year BCom (Accounting) students as the students are going through the experience and the lecturers are the recipients of the academic written work that does not meet the standard of good academic writing.

3.6 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The purposive sampling method has been adopted for this study. This is based on the researcher's decision on what she or he thinks will be the sample that will best represent the population under study. The researcher looks into the characteristics of the population together with the research questions and selects a sample that will represent the population (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). In purposive sampling a particular case is selected because it has features that are of a particular interest to that particular study (De Vos, et al., 2013).

In addition, (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015) indicate that the logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in-depth study. Therefore, purposive sampling method was applied when sampling the students, because students were chosen on the basis of the level of marks achieved. Students that acquired marks between 0-39% formed one group and those between 40% – 100% marks formed another group. All the third year lecturers were interviewed as the

researcher believed that both the lecturers and the students carry valuable knowledge about the phenomena under study.

In (Gentles et al., 2015), it is stated that Paton (1980,1990, 2002, 2015) points out that some researchers and scholars from diverse backgrounds have different thoughts about the choice of the appropriate sampling and its meaning. As a result, his topography of purposeful sampling strategies has been so influential to such an extent that it dominates the general qualitative methods literature on sampling, with a great many prominent methods authors quoting his work or descriptions. Owing to this, a lot of students and researchers have understood and described qualitative methods sampling in consistence with these sampling strategies.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

The research is cognisant that a data collection instrument must be able to effectively help in the mining of relevant data in order to address the objectives of the study. Thus, this study adopted a qualitative approach, employing open-ended unstructured group interviews with open ended questions and analysis of the documents, with an intention of addressing such objectives.

The researcher conducted group focus interviews that comprised six (6) BCom (Accounting) third - year lecturers and eighteen (18) students which were later qualitatively analysed. Additionally, thirty-three (33) test scripts and fifteen (15) group project reports for the same cohort of students were analysed with a view to finding the level of academic writing skills among students. The third – year Bcom (Accounting) students were divided into two groups, group one achieved a mark between 40%-100% in a test and group two achieved a mark between 0%-39% in the test:

Group focus interview is based on the assumption that a group interaction will result in a rich data as the participants have an opportunity to deliberate on the topic under review (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The analysis of documents is expected to provide the results that will indicate whether a phenomenon exists or not.

3.8 INSTRUMENT

Three focus group interviews with both lecturers and students were held. Two focus group interviews were held with seven and eleven students, respectively, and one focus group interview of six lecturers was also undertaken. In addition to the focus

group interviews, an analysis of test and project documents was performed by the Writing Centre of the university.

The questions were designed in such a way that they could assist the interviewer to solicit data from two sets of student interviewees which were classified in line with their pass rates, that is – students who obtained marks between 0 and 49 percent and those who scored between 50 and 100 percent.

The third-year lecturers were selected on the basis that they have appropriate data about the third-year level Bcom (Accounting) students which will help the interviewer to answer some of the research questions. Second to that, the researcher needed to ascertain whether the lecturers themselves are capable of helping these students to improve their academic writing skills or they themselves need to be empowered.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretative philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. It tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

A content qualitative data analysis has been adopted. It is a process of looking at data from different angles with a view to identifying keys (themes) in the text that will help us to understand and interpret the raw data (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

However, it is also worth explaining the main aim of sampling with special reference to the qualitative research. It is done with a view to acquiring information that is useful for understanding the complexity, depth and context surrounding a phenomenon as opposed to representing populations as in quantitative research.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In academic research, ethical considerations are significant (Sekonyela, 2019). Firstly, the researcher ensured that all ethical processes and considerations stipulated by the university were adhered to. The researcher applied for ethical clearance and it was approved. Secondly, the researcher distributed the consent forms during the group

focus interviews with both the lecturers and the students. The researcher explicitly made the participants aware that their participation in the study was voluntary. Those interested in participating in this research study were free to do so. Those not interested were free not to participate. The participants signed the consent forms to show their willingness to participate in the study.

Thirdly, the researcher requested a permission to voice record the interviews and take minutes so that the discussions are captured for the data presentation purpose, otherwise, it was going to be difficult for the researcher to remember everything that was discussed. The participants did give the permission to the researcher to voice-record and take minutes. The information was recorded in such a manner that the participants could not be identified. In addition, it was important to assure the participants that the study and its results would not place them at risk of criminal or civil liability, nor will it be damaging to their financial standing, employability or reputation. Their participation would also not have a negative impact on their studies or academic career as the main purpose of the study was to refine academic writing skills. The participants were once again assured that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the research methodology adopted, which is the qualitative research method, as the researcher wanted to gather the information from the participants that are experiencing academic writing skills challenges. The research paradigm which is interpretivism was discussed. The data collection and instrument tools such as the group focus interviews with lecturers and students, and the analysis of the test and project, and content data analysis tool employed in the study were also discussed. Finally, the target population, which is the lecturers and students were discussed, as the researcher believed that they have rich information about the phenomena under discussion, together with the sample size.

In the next chapter, the researcher presents the data.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aims to develop the strategy for refining the academic writing skills for third-year BCom (Accounting) students. The focus of this chapter is on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data based on the data captured during the focus group discussion with the lecturers and students, and from the analysis of the test and project. Qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretative philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. The data analysis themes in this chapter is based on the research objectives and the constructs, as stated in Chapter 2.

Thirty-three (33) test scripts and 15 group projects were analysed, regarding the students, six were in the group project. The thirty-three (33) students that the Writing Centre reviewed the test scripts for were also part of the students in the 15 group projects. The test scripts and group projects analysed are for a discipline called Auditing in the Accounting field. In the Auditing discipline it is where the Accounting students are expected to do a lot of writing and, as a result of this, it is where we picked up that the Accounting students are battling with academic writing skills. Through this discipline it was discovered that there is a glaring need to intervene.

Focus group discussion was held with six third year BCom (Accounting) lecturers. Two focus group discussions were held with the students, one focus group comprised eleven (11) students and the other group comprised seven (7) students. The eighteen (18) students that participated in the focus group discussion are also part of the thirty-three (33) students that had their test scripts and projects analysed.

4.2 CHALLENGES OF THE ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

There are three constructs that have been identified in the challenges of the academic writing skills and these are writing in second language, diverse culture and linguistic background, as well as different linguistic challenges faced by the students.

4.2.1 Writing in a second language

In the focus group discussion conducted with the two groups of students and a group of lecturers it was found that there was a glaring challenge in writing in a second language, as it has been highlighted in the following lines:

Student participants

Njabulo: *Sometimes it is not easy to understand what you are required to do in the assessment (test/examination) as a student due to the language barrier (English)...*

Nonjabulo: *Sometimes the questions look more or less the same, but the mark allocations are different, it is difficult to know as a student how much to write. In some cases, some students write one sentence and get a mark and another student writes four sentences and get no mark...*

Fikile: *Some of the time is lost during the time we as students are busy translating the English question to our mother tongue...*

Nomusa: *Planning and starting to write take a little bit of time as writing does not come naturally to me, I did not think I will have to write in the Accounting field, I thought I was going to do calculations...*

Lecturer participants

Msomi: *...Some students write something that I do not understand, they do not seem to know what they want to say...*

Naidoo: *Some of the students will write the standard principle or act as it is in the book, they struggle to apply the standard principle or act to the scenario given. As a result, they get no marks...*

It seems that writing in a second language is a challenge. Both students and lecturers have highlighted the challenges that are faced by the students. The students seem to be facing a challenge of expressing their understanding of the content. It is not clear whether or not the students fully comprehend the content. There is a possibility that the students that are facing academic writing skills challenges might also be facing the challenge of comprehension of the content, particularly auditing. According to (De silva, 2015), displaying content knowledge and understanding through the second language is complex. The level of ZPD could be high for both academic writing and

Auditing. Therefore, while addressing the scaffolding of the academic writing skills, a scaffolding of the content for Auditing might need to be addressed as well.

4.2.2 Diverse culture and linguistic background

There have been discussions in different Accounting professional forums on whether or not the mother tongue should be used in teaching and learning. Some professionals feel that students are disadvantaged by studying in a second language as the style of their mother tongue could be completely different and this will lead to difficulties in moving from one language to another. The student and lecturer participants in this study responded as follows:

Student participants

Thami: *Translating the scenario to our mother tongue and translating it back to English (second language) is time consuming and challenging...*

Fikile: *As I said before, this is a serious challenge, vocabulary is not enough...*

Nonhlanhla: *Maybe it will be better if we are given an opportunity to write in our own language...*

Sifiso: *Yo! I 'm not sure if I would cope if I was given an opportunity to write in mother tongue...*

Lecturer participants

Msomi: *The students do not finish the Auditing test or examination; they have highlighted translation from second language to mother tongue to be a contributing factor...*

Khanyile: *Students have asked me if there will ever be a time when we will give them an assessment paper in both languages (mother tongue and second language) like it is currently happening at the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) when the aspiring Chartered Accountants are writing the Board Examination...*

Mzolo: *Maybe it is high time we teach and assess the students in mother tongue, our students are not progressing because of the language barrier...*

Mkhize: *Would that not take us backward as we want the students to be ready to face both national and international employers or business people? I 'm scared that our students will not be able to engage in second language if they do everything in mother tongue.*

The students feel that it does take a little bit of time to translate the questions from English into their mother tongue. Transferring information from one language to another is a challenge as it might take longer to find vocabulary for the language you are transferring the information to (Singh, 2016). Fikile above did highlight that it does take time to translate from their mother tongue to the second language (English) and the vocabulary is not enough.

It is argued that the rhetorical patterns depend on each language and culture, and these differences might make it more challenging for the students to relate to the new writing conventions (Hasan et al., 2015). The style of writing for the first language could pose a challenge when a student is writing in second language in a case where the writing style of the second language is different from that of a first language (Kim, 2017).

There seems to be a confusion amongst students and lecturers as to whether or not teaching and assessing in mother tongue will yield better results. During the focus group discussion with both lecturers and students, there was an extensive deliberation on which language will work better. Both groups are not sure what will work better, however, the majority of students think mother tongue will be better. The lecturers are scared that if teaching and learning takes place only in mother tongue, the students will not be able to compete nationally and internationally as they will not be able to engage in the second language. As a result, students will be disadvantaged and struggle to get jobs.

4.2.3 Different linguistic challenges faced by the students

The Writing Centre was approached by the researcher to do the analysis of the test and the project. It identified the following linguistic and academic writing challenges, grouped into seven categories, and they are proper sentence structure, level of vocabulary, punctuation, paragraphing, spelling, cohesion and referencing.

Proper sentence structure

The challenges that were identified with regard to the sentence structure were:

Some sentences did not begin with a capital letter, capital letters on words in the middle of a sentence, omission of joining words, addition words making sentences longer when such words are omitted - the sentences still make sense and read well,

singular words instead of plural and plural where there should be singular, past and future tenses not applied where necessary, long sentences that lose meaning because multiple ideas are presented at once, confusion of relating to third person and object (it – them), incorrect word order, excessive use of “**the**” and “**and**” in sentences, incomplete sentences, short writing of words, the use of etc. instead of ‘ and the like’, using signs instead of words and capital letter writing throughout the sentences.

Level of vocabulary

Incorrect context of word usage and confusion of using were identified to be a problem.

Punctuation

There were punctuation errors identified and there are: incorrect use of punctuation marks, using strokes instead of or, incorrect comma placement and using commas where there should be full stops.

Paragraphing

Both the test and projects did not require students to write paragraphs, they had to write in the point form, so, the Writing Centre was not able to assess the students on paragraphing.

Spelling

There were spelling errors that were identified.

Cohesion

There were missing words within sentences that interfered with cohesion and the observation from the Writing Centre was that the Accounting students are writing in the point form. This was the case in both the test and project.

Referencing

Only seven assignments had reference lists. It was noted that the references were written incorrectly and in-text references were not included in most assignments, where they were included, they were incorrectly written.

In addition to the comments from the Writing Centre, both the students and the lecturers commented as follows:

Student participants

Thami: *I do not think about linguistic rules when I 'm writing, all I concentrate on is how can I get marks....*

Nonhlanhla: *Time is limited during the test and examination; I do not have time to think about linguistic rules...*

Lecturer participants

Msomi: *The writing skills of the students have deteriorated over the years, sentences are started with small letters, some of the important words such as places and names of people are written in small letters, they write long sentences, ...*

Khanyile: *The worst part for me is when they are writing in an instant messaging style, where they write short words which do not make sense, I do not know how many times I have told them that this is unprofessional...*

Based on the above analysis, the third-year BCom (Accounting) students do have linguistic challenges, there are lots of errors that were identified. It is disappointing that both the test and the project had these errors. The expectation would have been that the project would present few errors as the students had more time to do it and they type it on the computer so a spell check and review would have been expected to be used.

According to (Pospelova, 2016), students are most often weak at producing coherent and cohesive paragraphs, lack appropriate argumentation, and display inaccurate use of grammatical structures and lexis. In one of the Kenyan universities, lecturers expressed concerns about the declining standards of writing displayed by their students (Wanja, 2018). The main issues were that students were not following principles of good writing such as grammar, punctuation, choice of vocabulary and sentence structure. In addition, the students could not develop an argument and they were failing to demonstrate critical thinking in their argument.

Factors that might influence these students are first language writing ability, second language proficiency and writing experience in both languages. In addition, second language academic writing errors may be caused by the cognitive and social factors. It is likely that the errors will be higher if the structures of the first and the second languages are different. The use of social media is also posing a challenge as some of the students do use an instant messaging style in academic writing.

4.3 ASSISTING THE STUDENTS TO DEVELOP ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

There are three constructs that have been identified in assisting the students to develop academic writing skills, and they are preparedness of academics to develop academic writing skills, preparedness of the students to develop academic writing skills and intervention by the language expert.

4.3.1 Preparedness of academics to develop academic writing skills

A question was posed to both the students and lecturers on whether or not the Accounting lecturers were assisting the students to develop academic writing skills and whether or not the Accounting lecturers have a skill to assist students to develop academic writing skills.

Student participants

Thandi: *I believe that our lecturers are capable of training us, they really spend a lot of time explaining to us how we are supposed to write...*

Mazwi: *Our lecturers do give us a group feedback after the assessment and explain to us why we have missed the marks, the issue is usually around what we have written. They give us the solutions that are written professionally in the manner we are expected to write...*

Lindi: *...I believe our lecturers, especially the ones that are qualified as Chartered Accountants (CA's), have the ability to train us on academic writing because they have worked in companies and prepared reports, so they know what is expected in the field....*

Lecturer participants

Mkhize: *I do try my level best to assist students with academic writing skills. I do give feedback after assessments in a group. I also do a tutorial question with them in class to show them how they are supposed to write...*

Mzolo: *I wish I could be able to give individual feedback as opposed to group feedback, the class numbers are too big to give individual feedback...*

Khanyile: *I do try, I hope I 'm doing a great job in this, I 'm a second language speaker myself, I have learnt English as I move along. You know the poor education system that some of us had to go through in our beloved country...*

Nel: *I 'm happy to train the students to develop academic writing skills, I have the skill, the only challenge I have is the big class number. When I 'm marking, the first group that I mark I do give the feedback but as I move along I stop as giving feedback takes time, so I do get tired along the way. I wish I could have adequate time to give feedback. It works better in some cases when a student consults me using an email, I do spend time giving feedback and I have received positive feedback from the students...*

First English Language lecturers are confident that they can train the students to develop academic writing skills provided the numbers are not big. They believed that they are equipped to teach academic writing skills. Second Language English lecturers are not sure as they have developed academic writing skills as they move along, the poor South African schooling system failed these lecturers as they did not develop the required academic writing skills.

According to (Pineteh (2014), the poor schooling system and massification of Higher Education in South Africa has contributed to students that are facing academic writing challenges. Inadequate schooling infrastructure resources such as library, under-qualified teachers and socio economic factors such as the poor family background (no education experience and education kept for the elite) contribute to the academic writing challenges faced by the South African students (Chokwe, 2013). Lack of reading also contributes.

Second Language English lecturers indicated that they will have to be trained so that they can be able to train the students better. According to (Strauss et al., 2018), some of the discipline lecturers wanted to assist the students to develop academic writing skills, but the lecturers did not know how to do it. Students, on the other hand, believed that the lecturers are equipped to train them.

Some of the academic writing skills development approaches might not work due to discipline lecturers' preparedness in communicative teaching (Hasan et al., 2015). Discipline lecturers have challenges with giving students clear instructions and constructive feedback on the written work (Singh, 2016). Discipline lectures are responsible for assisting students to develop academic writing skills, and where necessary, they should develop academic writing workshops or courses that will help the students (Singh, 2016).

When an academic writing course or workshop is designed the needs of the students must be considered so that this intervention will yield the desired outcome of developing academic writing skills, (Alharbi, 2019).

Discipline-specific lecturers should take responsibility and provide support to students. However, these lecturers should be given the support as well (Wagner et al., 2014).

4.3.2 Preparedness of the students in developing academic writing skills

It has been shared in different forums that the South African public school system is producing pupils that are not able to write. It is even worse for Accounting students as they do not have an interest in writing. The students and lecturers in this study commented as follows on this matter:

Student participants

Nonhlanhla: *I was shocked to discover that I have to write a lot, I chose the Accounting career because I like numbers, I thought I was going to be dealing with the numbers, little did I knew that I have to be able to write as well...*

Fikile: *Writing does not come naturally to us (Accounting students) ...we are really battling, hence the pass rates in Auditing, can't the Auditing lecturers include some numbers in Auditing...*

Zano: *The writing that we do at the University is hard compared to the writing we did in school...*

Zama: *It is true that the writing that we do at the University is different from what we did at school, at university you have to reference where you got the principle from, this is new to us...*

Thabi: *We have realised at third year that having good academic writing skills will help you to pass, especially Auditing, something must be done to assist us with academic writing skills...*

Lindi: *I hope knowing how to write will assist us to apply the principles or acts to the scenarios and improve the understanding of the concept...*

Lecturer participants

Naidoo... *Some of the students do not seem to be interested in learning how to write, when you look at the academic written work, it does not look like they have made an effort to write something that will be professional and which will make sense...*

Mzolo: *I do not know how many times I have tried to tell the students that they must make sure that they write professionally, I 'm not convinced that they are listening to me when I am judging the substandard work that they submit...*

The majority of students choose the Accounting career because they think they will be calculating as most of them like numbers. These students do not seem to have the motivation or passion for writing. Some students that are studying towards vocational or professional qualification indicate at the beginning of their studies the lack of interest in the academic writing as they do not see how it will add value to their careers (Strauss et al., 2018).

The assessment activities (tests, assignments, examinations and projects) are made of the combination of numbers and writing. During the group focus discussion with lecturers, the lecturers highlighted that the students tend to do well in the number-related question as opposed to written-related question. It became clear in the group focus discussion with lecturers that this could be a contributing factor in the lower pass rate in Auditing as Auditing is the module where the students have to write a lot.

The lecturers feel that some Accounting students are producing substandard written work. This could be due to the time pressure they write under, lack of planning, lack of comprehension of the topics that the student is writing about and lack of understanding the English requirements or rules. Second language writers are seen to be producing written work that is substandard, sometimes this could be the case when there has been no explicit writing instruction (Holmes et al., 2018). The challenges faced by these students related to grammar, vocabulary, organisation and flow of ideas, critical thinking, and plagiarism (Ravichandran et al., 2017).

4.3.3 Intervention by the language expert

Some of the Accounting lecturers do have doubts about the language skills, they are not sure if they will be able to train the students. There have been deliberations at the Department of Accounting staff meetings on whether or not it will be beneficial to involve the language expert. The students and the lecturers in this study commented as follows:

Student participants

Lindi: *I remember that at second year in the Auditing class Mr Masuku (Auditing lecturer) indicated that he has invited Mr Masombuka from the Writing Centre to come and work with us. Mr Masuku explained to us that the reason why he has invited Mr Masombuka is because Mr Masombuka will help with the development of academic writing skills. The Auditing pass rate has been low in the past, so the Department of Accounting and Auditing is suspecting that academic writing skills are a contributing factor and, as a result, they thought an intervention by the Writing Centre will help students. Unfortunately, as students we said we do not want this intervention, so Mr Masombuka stopped coming...*

Zano: *We were wondering why Mr Masuku brought Mr Masombuka, we attended Mr Masuku's class for Auditing not an English lesson...*

Lecturer participants

Mzolo: *I think involving an expert might help us with the academic writing skills challenge faced by our students...*

Mtshali: *I also think that an expert intervention might assist, I 'm always concerned as an Auditing lecturer if I have adequate resources to train the students to be good in academic writing. I do face my own struggles when I 'm writing...*

The Accounting lecturers feel that they are not language experts, the students should get help and come back ready. There seems to be a disjuncture between the academic writing practitioners and the discipline-specific subject lecturers, and this lack of collaboration undermines the importance of developing academic writing skills by the students (Esambe et al., 2016). The

development of academic writing skills should be embedded in the discipline-specific content as this is seen to be effective (Strauss, 2017).

Discussion should be held with discipline-specific lecturers so that they can embed what has been learnt in the academic writing course in the discipline-specific content (Hathaway, 2015). Academic writing skills should be embedded in the curriculum as a requirement as opposed to being a support cause as this has a transformative benefit. The argument is that all students need academic writing skills training (Hathaway, 2015).

Academic writing skills course must not be seen as a remedial or compensation tool, however, it should be seen as a developmental tool that will take the student to the next level (Hathaway, 2015). It is critical to identify the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) who can assist the students to develop the academic writing skills, therefore, it is important for the language expert to work close with the discipline specific lecturers.

4.4 CURRENT ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS PROGRAMME AND/OR PROJECTS IN THE CURRICULUM OF STUDENTS

There are three constructs that have been identified in the current academic writing skills programme and projects in the curriculum of students and there are activities in the curriculum for students to develop academic writing skills, best practises of academic writing skills programmes or projects and attempts to address the academic writing skills.

4.4.1 Activities in the curriculum for students to develop academic writing skills

A question was asked to both the students and the lecturers on whether or not there are adequate activities in the curriculum to assist the students to develop academic writing skills. The students and lecturers responded as follows:

Student participants

Maphumu: *I think we have adequate task to do where we can develop academic writing skills...*

Thami: *If academic writing entails tests, examinations, assignments, projects, then I will say we have an adequate task...*

Lecturer participants

Masuku: *I think we do give students adequate task where they can exercise and develop academic writing skills.....*

Mtshali: *If academic writing skills entails tutorial questions, tests, exams, assignments, projects, yes we do give the students adequate task.....*

The Accounting students are given assignments, tutorial questions, projects, objective tests, tests and examinations where they have to exercise academic writing. It does not seem to be clear whether or not a clear academic writing skills development plan is in place or effective. Writing should be taught as a process (pre-writing, writing and post-writing). This process entails brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and editing (Alharbi, 2019). The lecturers indicated that they do give group feedback to students after marking the scripts or sometimes they give individual feedback when they start marking and they stop along the way as fatigue starts kicking in due to high numbers of students.

The lecturers indicated that they give better feedback when the student has raised queries in the form of an email, the feedback given to the student is more constructive. The challenge might not be the adequacy of the projects or activities in the curriculum but it can be the process followed to assist the students to develop academic writing skills.

There was a comment from the Writing Centre that it seems like the students are not expected to start with the introduction and end with a conclusion. There was no introduction and conclusion in the student answers and in the memorandum prepared by the lecturer. Therefore, it seems that the students are not trained to follow the writing process as stated above. The activities could be adequate but the writing process could be the challenge.

4.4.2 Best practices of academic writing skills programmes or projects

It seems that an introduction of the academic writing module and the collaboration with the language expert or Writing Centre contribute positively to the development of academic writing skills. The students and lecturers have commented as follows:

Lindi: *Now I regret why we chased away Mr Masombuka from the Writing Centre when we were doing level 2...*

Sandile: *In my opinion, we do need an intervention from an expert or Writing Centre...*

Lecturer participants

Masuku: *Departments of Accounting in other universities have shared with me that they have an English expert who assists students with their projects or assignments...*

Mtshali: *In one of the successful universities, they have opened a Writing Centre and the Department of Accounting has been sending their students to get help...*

The lecturers do see the need for the intervention of the language expert and the Writing Centre, however, they also cited time to be an issue as there is a lot that has to be covered in the short space of time. Academic Writing Centre team may collaborate with the students and discipline lecturers in order to address the academic writing skills challenges (Dowse et al., 2015).

There should be planned activities that the students should take to the Writing Centre and it must be compulsory to submit these particular activities to the Writing Centre (Itua et al., 2014). This will encourage the students to attend to the development of the academic writing skills. Resources must be made available to students (Holmes et al., 2018). A Writing Centre should be created so that the students can get the assistance they need (Pineteh, 2014).

The students indicated that they will appreciate an emphasis and an explanation of what academic writing is at the first year level so that they can prepare themselves. (Hathaway, 2015) argues that all students, whatever their linguistic identities, can benefit from an explicit and structured introduction of academic writing. It is important to include the training of the academic writing skills in the curriculum as opposed to offering it as an extra voluntary training. This approach is transformative.

The emphasis at first year level is more on calculations as opposed to academic writing. The students indicated that it will be better for the focus or attention on academic writing to start at first year level rather than later. The suggestion from the

students as well is that in addition to having an academic writing module, the lesson learnt from this module must be embedded in all the modules.

A student that was in the foundation programme indicated that a pure English language course will not assist them to develop the academic writing skills, the students indicated that in the foundation programme they have two communication skills subjects, but this does not help them to develop academic writing skills. The students suggested that maybe the intervention will work better if the language expert is familiar with the Accounting subjects. The lecturers also suggested that it will be better that the language expert or the Writing Centre intervention be run by a person with the knowledge of the Accounting subjects.

It seems that an introduction of an academic writing module, embedding the skills learnt in modules in the discipline modules and using an expert or Writing Centre would be the best practice.

4.4.3 Attempts to address the academic writing skills

It is clear that a proper strategy should be developed for the development of academic writing skills and the implementation thereof. Scaffolding is critical in assisting the students to construct academic writing skills.

Student participants

Thabi: *It will be better if the department introduces a project similar to the project that is done in business information system at first year level in all the semesters.....*

Njabulo: *I agree, this project exposed us to research concepts that we are not familiar with, such as literature review, referencing, plagiarism, etc.....*

Zano: *I would be happy if the Department explained to us at first year level what academic writing is about.....*

Zama: *I think academic writing should be emphasised from level one and the assessment must entail more academic writing as opposed to calculations.....*

Thabi: *If the lecturers feel that we need the intervention of the Writing Centre or expert, this must be introduced from level one.....*

Zano: *The Writing Centre expert should have some Accounting background so that she will understand how we write in Accounting.....*

Lecturer participants

Mzolo: *It will be better if the department introduces a project similar to the project that is done in Business Information System at second year level, the students speak very highly of this project...*

Nel: *I 'm surprised that the students are positive about the project, they did not like doing it when they were in first year, I suppose they did not see the benefit until now...*

Mtshali: *I would like to work very closely with the Writing Centre and see if the Auditing results are not going to improve...*

Masuku: *We need to give the feedback of the group focus interview to all the staff so that each and every one of us can revisit our modules to ensure that we trained the students on academic writing skills, we have to speak with one voice...*

Naidoo: *I think we need to get the Writing Centre to come and explain to us and our students what academic writing is, and this has to start at first year level...*

The students indicated that a project similar to the project they do at first year level in Business Information Systems must be introduced in all the semesters as this project integrates different components of communication skills such as reading, academic writing and presentation skills. They believe that an integrated approach will make a huge difference at different levels of study.

It is important to note that academic writing is a difficult and complex task, therefore, it takes time and effort to develop this skill. It is, therefore, important that academic writing lessons are spread throughout the curriculum so that the students can be given adequate time to learn this skill, instead of covering every academic writing techniques in one course (Alharbi, 2019). Academic writing skills improve as the student is practising (Wanja, 2018). Therefore, the scaffolding of the curriculum is vital.

Incorporating academic writing training in the curriculum and starting the training at the inception of the programme will help the students to gradually build academic writing skills. Clear writing instructions to students must be provided so that the students can focus on what is needed (Holmes et al., 2018). Introducing intervention measures at the school level could reduce the academic writing challenges faced by the students when they reach Higher Education (Millin et al., 2018).

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a discussion of findings and recommendations, discussion and conclusion, and limitations based on the data collected through group focus meetings with both lecturers and students, analysis of the test and project, and the literature review. The discussion on findings and recommendations is divided into three objectives as stated below, this is further divided into three constructs under each objective. The discussion and summary section reflects on whether or not the study has addressed the research questions.

5.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT: REAFFIRM

It seems that the third-year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in Kwazulu-Natal are challenged with academic writing skills and this seems to affect their academic performance. In general, Accounting students are good with calculations and they are challenged with academic writing. This is based on discussions in different platforms such as South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) meetings and workshops.

Writing well is really a big challenge for both native and non-native students. In general, it is much bigger with the students of English as a foreign language. Students nowadays have very little interest in writing, which is so important to fulfil the education requirements. This may be due to technology progress which has its negative effect on student's skills of writing because of the availability of the ready-made assignments. (Muslim, 2014).

Writing can be defined as an articulation of thinking, an act of choosing among an array of modes or forms, some involving words (Wagner et al., 2014). Academic writing plays a critical role in socialising students into the discourse of subjects and disciplines in universities. Many students, especially those in many South African universities, are struggling to maintain academic writing standards that are acceptable in Higher Education (Pineteh, 2014).

Academic writing is important for students in order to master the English language and to be able to learn other disciplines where English is used as the language of instruction (Alharbi, 2019). Writing is viewed as a thinking tool, a tool for language development, critical thinking and learning in all disciplines (Alharbi, 2019).

5.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES: REITERATED

5.3.1 Aim of the study

It is to refine academic writing skills of the third-year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in Kwazulu-Natal.

5.3.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives that informed the study are as follows:

- To determine challenges of the academic writing skills faced by the third-year BCom (Accounting) students.
- To explore the perception of the BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third-year BCom (Accounting) students.
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the current academic writing skills programme or projects in the curriculum for BCom (Accounting) students.

5.3.3 Research questions

5.3.3.1 Overarching research question

How can academic writing skills of third-year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected university in Kwazulu-Natal be refined?

5.3.3.2 Subsidiary questions

The subsidiary questions are as follows:

- Why do the third-year BCom (Accounting) students seem to be challenged by academic writing skills?
- What is the perception of the BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third-year BCom (Accounting) students to develop the academic writing skills?
- Are the academic writing programmes or projects effective and efficient to assist the third-year BCom (Accounting) students to develop academic writing skills?

5.4 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the data collected, the following findings were made and the recommendation has been made for the three objectives of the study, as stated above:

5.4.1 Challenges of the academic writing skills

There are three constructs discussed below, which are writing in a second language, diverse culture and linguistic background, as well as different linguistic challenges faced by the students.

5.4.1.1 Writing in a second language

Findings:

Based on the data collected, it seems that the third-year BCom (Accounting) students have challenges with writing in a second language. It seems that the students in some cases are not able to understand the assessment questions (tests or examinations) due to language barrier, so, this makes it difficult to write the required answer. Planning how to answer and starting to write take longer. Academic writing does not come naturally to the Accounting students. According to (De Silva, 2015), displaying content knowledge and understanding of a subject through a second language is a very complex process. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) appears to be higher with regard to writing in a second language.

Recommendation

The style of assessment should be reconsidered at first-year level for BCom (Accounting) students, most of the assessments should consist of written work, not numbers, as this is misleading to the students. This perpetuates the notion that Accounting is about the numbers, whereas this is not true. When the students start writing early in their studies, they will develop the academic writing skills that are needed in Higher Education as they will have a reasonable amount of time to practise writing.

It is important to create the platform for students to practise academic writing. Also, it is important to note that academic writing is a difficult and complex task, therefore, it takes time and effort to develop this skill. It is, therefore, important that academic writing lessons are spread throughout the curriculum so that the students can be given adequate time to learn this skill, instead of covering every academic writing techniques in one course (Alharbi, 2019). Academic writing skills improve as the student is

practising (Wanja, 2018). Therefore, it is critical that the academic writing activities are scaffold over the curriculum.

5.4.1.2 Diverse culture and linguistic background

Findings

Translating the second language into the mother tongue is a challenge, as this is time consuming and sometimes, the students are struggling to find the required word due to the limited vocabulary. The style of the second language and mother tongue could be different, which poses a challenge to the students. The contributing factor to challenges in academic writing practices is due to diverse academic, culture and linguistic background (Singh, 2016).

Transferring information from one language to another is a challenge as it might take longer to find vocabulary for the language you are transferring the information to (Singh, 2016). Students that are studying in a second language are faced with their rhetorical and cultural writing patterns in their home language (native language). It is argued that the rhetorical patterns depend on each language and culture, and these differences might make it more challenging for the students to relate to the new writing conventions (Hasan et al., 2015). The style of writing for the first language could pose a challenge when a student is writing in second language in the case where the writing style of the second language is different from that of a first language (Kim, 2017)

Recommendations

The South African students are expected to come to university with the experience of an exposure in both mother tongue and second language as these students have both languages in their school curriculum. They are expected to have developed the vocabulary as well. Therefore, vocabulary is not expected to be an issue. However, these students are coming to university with lower vocabulary. The prior experience that the students bring to the university seem to be a challenge. It is recommended that the university English Department and the Faculty of Education should engage with the schools to ascertain what the issues are and intervene at the school level.

5.4.1.3 Different linguistic challenges faced by the students

Findings

The students seem to have a challenge with the linguistic rules, and this is based on the analysis of the test and project. Challenges in the linguistic rules are poor sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and cohesion. It is interesting to note that both the tests and projects had the same linguistic errors, even though the test is written under time pressure. However, the students are given adequate time to do the project and they do the project as a group. Accounting students do not seem to understand referencing. The continual challenge for students to express themselves in writing could lead to loss of creativity in academic writing (Muslim, 2014). This might affect the discipline-specific subjects where academic writing might be the key to success. Some of the challenges faced by the students are paragraphing, ideas, grammar, spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

Recommendations

The students should be taught the linguistic rules by the Writing Centre (an involvement of More Knowledgeable Others) and they should also participate in the Readers Are Leaders project offered by the Writing Centre. According to Mutimani, reading does improve the academic writing skills. In addition, feedback about what is expected at the institutions of Higher Learning should be given to the schools. Challenges in the linguistic rules such as poor sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and cohesion should be addressed at school. Introducing intervention measures at the school level could reduce the academic writing challenges faced by the students when they reach the higher education (Millin et al., 2018).

5.4.2 Assisting students to develop academic writing skills

There are three constructs which are discussed below, and these are preparedness of academics to develop academic writing skills, preparedness of students to develop the academic writing skills and intervention by the language expert.

5.4.2.1 Preparedness of academics to develop academic writing skills

Findings

The students seem to be comfortable with the training from lecturers, even though in most cases the lecturers give them a group feedback due to the high number of

students. The lecturers seem to be interested in training the students, however, the second language lecturers are not sure if they are capable of training the students on academic writing as they also are the product of the poor education system in South Africa.

Recommendation

There should be a training programme designed for Accounting lecturers who need to develop their language skills so that these lecturers could be able to train the students on academic writing. According to (Strauss et al., 2018), some of the discipline lecturers wanted to assist the students to develop academic writing skills, but the lecturers did not know how to do it. However, some lecturers do not think it is their responsibility to assist students with the development of their academic writing skills. Lecturers are responsible for investigating what students are struggling with in order to assist them (students) to deal with their struggles (Wanja, 2018). Lecturers should give students more academic writing tasks so that the students can have an opportunity to practise.

Lecturers might not have a clear picture of how to communicate the writing instruction due to their own challenges in giving academic writing tasks (Jonsmoen, 2013). Some discipline-specific lecturers are not confident to teach academic writing as they are concerned that they might not be fully knowledgeable about the subject (Mostert et al., 2018). The tutors should also be trained so that they can assist the students. The more the More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) the better, so that all these people can assist the students to develop their academic writing skills. The involvement of tutors will assist lecturers to follow the writing process as most lecturers highlighted the high numbers to be a challenge in giving individual feedback, hence they resorted to the group feedback.

5.4.2.2 Preparedness of the students in developing academic writing skills

Findings

Accounting students do not seem to be passionate about writing as they thought Accounting is about numbers. Some students that are studying towards vocational or professional qualification indicate at the beginning of their studies the lack of interest

in academic writing as they do not see how it will add value to their careers (Strauss et al., 2018).

Recommendations

The students should be trained on academic writing from first year of study and they should be informed from first year about the importance of academic writing at both Higher Education institution and in their careers. Academic writing skills develop as the students are afforded an opportunity to practise, therefore, an opportunity to practise must be made available, as stated in the first recommendation.

5.4.2.3 Intervention by the language expert

Findings

It appears that the Accounting students and the lecturers do not think a language expert that does not have an Accounting background will be able to train the Accounting students well.

Recommendations

An intervention by a language expert should be considered. The discipline-specific lecturers should take the responsibility of providing academic writing training to their students, and this responsibility should not be left in the hands of the linguistic expert. These lecturers should seek assistance from the linguistic expert in order to train their students well (Hathaway, 2015).

5.4.3 Current academic writing skills programme and/or projects in the curriculum of students

5.4.3.1 Activities in the curriculum for students to develop academic writing skills

Findings

There seem to be reasonable activities (tests, assignments, projects and examinations) in the curriculum where academic writing skills can be developed, but the challenge is that the academic writing processes are not given the necessary attention. The other challenge might be that the style or format of the assessment for this activities does not allow the academic writing format to be followed. The way questions are asked might not be structured such that the students have to follow the academic writing format or process.

Recommendations

The activities that are given to students must be assessed and be aligned with the academic writing format (i.e. introduction, body and conclusion) so that there is an opportunity for students to learn how to follow the academic writing format. A correct behaviour of how academic writing must be done must be inculcated in the students. Lecturers should be careful when choosing the teaching and learning method and select the method that will drive the correct behaviour of students.

The teaching and learning method should incorporate the development of the academic writing skills, especially for the second language students (Itua et al., 2014). Writing should be taught as a process (pre-writing, writing and post-writing). This process entails brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and editing (Alharbi, 2019). Therefore, it is critical that the students are given activities that will give them an opportunity to go through the academic writing process.

5.4.3.2 Best practices of academic writing skills programmes or projects

Findings

The University has the Writing Centre, however, the lecturer did try to bring the intervention of the Writing Centre when the students were in year two, and it was rejected by the students.

Recommendations

A Writing Centre should be created so that the students can get the assistance they need (Pineteh, 2014). Academic Writing Centre team may collaborate with the students and lecturers in order to address the academic writing skills challenges (Dowse et al., 2015). There should be planned activities that the students should take to the Writing Centre and it must be compulsory to submit these particular activities to the Writing Centre (Itua et al., 2014). This will encourage the students to attend to the development of the academic writing skills. Resources must be made available to students (Holmes et al., 2018).

The discipline lecturer should work very closely with the Writing Centre or language expert in supporting the students. The discipline lecturer must not distance himself or herself from the project, there must be a collaboration between the discipline lecturer and the Writing Centre staff or language expert. Collaboration of the linguistic lecturers, discipline-specific lecturers and students is key in the development of the academic writing skills (Pineteh, 2014).

The development of the academic writing skills should be embedded in the discipline-specific content as this has been seen to be effective (Strauss, 2017). The role of the Writing Centre should be clear, it should include training students on linguistic rules such as creation of proper sentence structure and paragraphs, punctuation, spelling, cohesion and referencing. The Writing Centre or language expert should provide training on reading skills as well, as this will improve the vocabulary and academic writing skills (Mutimani, 2016). Reading skills training should include the reading of academic articles (Hathaway, 2015).

5.4.3.3 Attempts to address the academic writing skills

Findings

There is no clear integrated plan on how academic writing skills will be developed throughout the curriculum. It seems that each discipline lecturer does his or her thing. There was a project that the students did at level one and the students value this project, as they believe that it had a lot of lessons. However, the lessons learnt from this project were not embedded in the other modules.

Recommendations

At the inception of the programme, a BCom (Accounting) student should be trained on academic writing skills. A programme or a workshop must be developed that will explain what academic writing is to students, how do you develop it and what is expected from them. One of the lecturers highlighted that it is important for the students to understand that developing academic writing skills is a process, it requires patience, focus and practice, it cannot be developed over a short space of time.

There should at least be one project or assignment per annum designed such that the students will go through the academic writing process, so that they will be able to develop academic writing skills. Writing should be taught as a process (pre-writing, writing and post-writing). This process entails brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and editing (Alharbi, 2019). The project that the first year students are doing must be reviewed by all the discipline lecturers, and they should assess what it is that can be applied in other modules throughout the curriculum, this scaffolding process is critical. In addition, this kind of project must be replicated in other levels of study. This is a recommendation from the students that were interviewed.

Other Recommendations

Recommendation for further studies

It will be interesting to do an investigation in order to assess whether or not the students that have academic writing skills challenges do indeed understand the Accounting content, particularly Auditing or maybe the challenge of academic writing skills is not the only issue, but it is intertwined with the understanding of the Accounting content. It will also be interesting to do an investigation to assess whether or not teaching and learning in the Accounting field should be taking place in a mother tongue.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In summary, the literature review and the data collected did provide a scientific and practical evidence that addresses the overarching question and the subsidiary research questions as stated above. The conclusion section will be based on the three subsidiary research questions.

Why do the third-year BCom (Accounting) students seem to be challenged by academic writing skills?

The third-year BCom (Accounting) students have a challenge with academic writing skills. The study provided evidence that it is difficult to understand the content in a second language, therefore, it is normal for third-year BCom (Accounting) students to have challenges as they are studying in a second language. The students have linguistic challenges such as creating a proper sentence, punctuation, cohesion, referencing and have less vocabulary.

The researcher in this study intends to inform the relevant authorities to give feedback to schools so that the schools can address the linguistic challenges faced by the students at the school level in South Africa as the South African children are exposed to the second language (English) at school.

However, in the meantime the Writing Centre should provide linguistic lessons to the current students. The Writing Centre should also assist on how to address the different language styles faced by these students as the students are exposed to their mother tongue and they have to translate the information to the second language. It is clear in the literature that this poses a challenge.

What is the perception of the BCom (Accounting) lecturers in assisting the third-year BCom (Accounting) students to develop the academic writing skills?

The lecturers are willing to train the students, however, some lecturers might not have adequate knowledge to train the students. Therefore, these lecturers must be trained. The huge number of students in class also poses a challenge as the lecturers are not able to follow the writing process such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and editing (Alharbi, 2019) as this requires a lot of time. More Knowledgeable Others (MKO), such as the tutors, should be trained so that they can assist the lecturers.

In addition, the Accounting students are not passionate about writing as they chose the Accounting career because they had an interest in numbers. It is important that the activities in the curriculum that will introduce Accounting students to academic writing be introduced from the beginning of their studies and be carried through the end so that the interest in academic writing can be developed and the students can have adequate opportunity to develop their academic writing skills. This scaffolding process is very critical.

Are the academic writing programmes or projects effective and efficient to assist the third-year BCom (Accounting) students to develop academic writing skills?

The best practice that has been identified is for the institution to introduce an academic writing module that will give basic training to the students, and the creation of the Writing Centre. The lessons of the training from this module should be embedded in all the modules. It is important for discipline-specific lecturers to work very closely with the Writing Centre team, otherwise, the intervention of the Writing Centre is not seen as a developmental tool, but it is seen as a deficiency tool that is there to fix the weak students.

Therefore, it will be critical for a discipline specific lecturer to introduce assignments or projects that the students will have to take to the Writing Centre and this lecturer should work very closely with the Writing Centre to assist the students to develop the academic writing skills. The intervention of the Writing Centre was not welcomed by the students, therefore, it is critical that the Accounting lecturer work very closely with the Writing Centre instead of working in silos so that the students can see that the development of the academic writing skill is also important to the discipline lecturer.

The lessons learnt with regard to academic writing skills at level one must be fine-tuned and be spread over the curriculum. In addition, each lecturer should revisit the style of assessment in order to ensure that the writing process and format is followed. It was indicated by the Writing Centre that on the analysis of test and project, there was no introduction and conclusion in the student work and also in the memorandum prepared by the lecturer. A good writing behaviour must be inculcated to the students in all the assessments so that they will recognise the importance of good writing and they will develop the skill.

5.6 LIMITATIONS

The study is only based in one university and in one province in South Africa. It is also based on one level of study, few students were interviewed and only third-year lecturers were interviewed. The analysis of tests and project was limited to one Accounting discipline called Auditing out of the four Accounting disciplines.

There was no opportunity to assess the cohesion of the paragraphs as both the tests and the project analysed did not have paragraphs.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Annexure A: Open Ended Interview Questions Schedule

Lecturers

1. What does academic writing skills entails?
2. What projects or assignments do you have in place to help students to develop academic writing skills?
3. Do you spend time to give attention to the linguistic rules and give students constructive feedback on their academic writing skills? If not, do you involve the writing centre?
4. Do you believe that you have adequate expertise to provide academic writing skills training to students?
5. What are your views on accounting lecturers providing academic writing skills training to students? or do you think this should be the responsibility of the writing centre?
6. Do you think the accounting students should also do research methodology like other students that are doing research at undergraduate level?

Students

1. What do you understand about academic writing skills?
2. Do you think that the assignments and projects are training you to be able to develop the academic writing skills?
3. Do you think your accounting lecturers are equipped to provide academic writing skills?
4. How does the intervention of the writing centre assist you to develop academic writing skills?
5. Do you think the accounting students should also do research methodology like other students that are doing research at undergraduate level?

APPENDIX B: VERBATIM REPORTS



Verbatim report on open ended questions in a group focus meeting

Lecturers

1. What does academic writing skills entails?
Some lecturers thought academic writing means writing literature, dissertation and thesis, and referencing.
Some lecturers thought academic writing is research work that is presented in a professional manner.
After some discussion, it became clear that all written work in academia qualifies to be called academic writing.
Communicating and presenting your ideas to readers and having readership in your mind.
Communicating clearly
2. What projects or assignments do you have in place to help students to develop academic writing skills?
The lecturers feel that they have adequate activities to help students to develop academic writing skills as all forms of assessment have to be written in a professional manner. However, there is a lack of tracking the development of students.
3. Do you spend time to give attention to the linguistic rules and give students constructive feedback on their academic writing skills? If not, do you involve the writing centre?
The lecturers feel that they give enough academic writing guidance in a group. Some lecturers said they do make comments in the answer book, even though sometimes they stop along the way as the number of students is big. Some lecturers feel that they are able to give more attention on academic writing skills if the students consult via email.
4. Do you believe that you have adequate expertise to provide academic writing skills training to students?
The first English language speakers felt that they believe that they are capable, however, they cited time to be limited.
The second English language speakers were not sure, they believe that they are doing the best they can.

5. What are your views on accounting lecturers providing academic writing skills training to students? or do you think this should be the responsibility of the writing centre?

The accounting lecturers do not mind, provided they have support of tutors. They are not opposed to the writing centre intervention provided that person would have the accounting background. The writing centre expert must be stationed in the Faculty so that he or she is easily accessible to students and staff.

6. Do you think the accounting students should also do research methodology like other students that are doing research at undergraduate level?

They are not sure if this will be relevant to an accounting students.

Students (Group 1)

7. What do you understand about academic writing skills?

Interestingly, this group defined academic writing to be all the academic writing activities that they have to partake on at the university.

8. Do you think that the assignments and projects are training you to be able to develop the academic writing skills?

The students believe that they have adequate activities to learn academic writing skills from. One of the project is helpful in teaching them how to research on the internet and referencing.

9. Do you think your accounting lecturers are equipped to provide academic writing skills?

The students believe that the Lecturers are equipped to train them on academic writing and there is enough examples such as the memo for the past papers that the students are able to refer to.

10. How does the intervention of the writing centre assist you to develop academic writing skills?

A person with Accounting background, particularly Auditing will help.

11. Do you think the accounting students should also do research methodology like other students that are doing research at undergraduate level?

The student does not understand what this entails. One student ask what will they be researching about in the accounting field.

Other

- English as a second language is a problem. Writing in this second language poses challenges, however, some students thought it might be difficult to do it in a mother tongue.
- Sometimes, a question that look similar carries different marks, this is confusing. They think they do understand the scenario and the questions but the challenge is writing the correct answer.

Students (Group 2)

12. What do you understand about academic writing skills?

13. Do you think that the assignments and projects are training you to be able to develop the academic writing skills?

The students felt that it will help to have a module at first year that introduce students to the Accounting Jargon like a legal skill module in law, which will teach students how to write and present.

The issue for students particularly in a module referred to as Auditing which requires academic writing skills is presenting the answer not knowledge of the content. Writing is second language is an issue.

14. Do you think your accounting lecturers are equipped to provide academic writing skills?

The students felt that the Lecturers seem to be knowledgeable and capable of training them to write academically. Although sometimes the students feel that some of the activities are pitched a high level.

15. How does the intervention of the writing centre assist you to develop academic writing skills?

The students stated that it will be great to have a person at the writing centre with the Accounting background who would be able to assist the students on how to write in accounting.

16. Do you think the accounting students should also do research methodology like other students that are doing research at undergraduate level?

The students reported that it will be great to have a project similar to the MIS first year project every semester that helped the student to learn how to write a report and present it.

Other comments

- Accounting students must be told from first year that accounting is not about numbers so that students are mental prepared to deal with the academic writing skills. Students indicated that at second year level, they turn away the writing centre intervention as they did not see value at the time, at third year they have realised that the intervention might have assisted them.
- What is the value of training students to write well academically in the 4th Industrial Revolution since there is an APP that is able to review the written work.
- Some questions are not clear.

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION LECTURERS



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

- I, M. Z. W. 2004 MAJWE have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.


Participant's signature

Page 2 of 2



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

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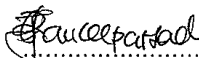
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4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, MRS THANESHA REDDY JANKEERASAD..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


Participant's signature

3 OCTOBER 2019
Date



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INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

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9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, MSIZI C. GWALA have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.



 Participant's signature

3/10/2019

 Date



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8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Qoneleni Ichumelo..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


.....
Participant's signature

03.10.19
.....
Date



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INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

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 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Anne Soldat have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

Anne Soldat
Participant's signature

03 October 2019
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, RUDOLF MFUNDO MBANJWA..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


.....
Participant's signature

03 October 2019
.....
Date

STUDENTS: GROUP 1



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.


I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Simangale Mkhwanazi have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


 Participant's signature

04/10/2019
 Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Thobani Innocent Xhoto..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


.....
Participant's signature

04/10/2019
.....
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

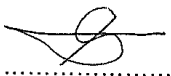
I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Mxolisi Brian Mkhlangase have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.



Participant's signature

04/10/2019

Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Lungelo Nxale..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


.....
Participant's signature

04/10/2019.....
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Thandeka Lungele Mntambo have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.



Participant's signature

04/10/2019

Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Siphesihle Nompumelelo Buthelezi have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


 Participant's signature

04/10/2019
 Date

GROUP 2



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
 - b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The lines of reporting to the relevant structures is open. I will be able to report the researcher to the relevant structures of the university if there is a conflict.
 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Momodou Zithali..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

Momodou Zithali
Participant's signature

03/10/2019
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.


I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: There could be a conflict with the researcher.
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8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Nombulelo Zinhle Mthembu have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


.....
Participant's signature

03/10/2019
.....
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

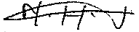
I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
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5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

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10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Ntokozi Mkhahle..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


Participant's signature

03/10/2019
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.


I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
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 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
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11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Athini Tanda have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


Participant's signature

03/10/19
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
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 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, N.TOKOZO Zondi..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

N.H. Zondi.....
Participant's signature

03/10/2019.....
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

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The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

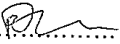
I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
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9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Bulelwa Mnyazane..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


Participant's signature

03 / 10 / 2019
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

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The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.


I am aware that:

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3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
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5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

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10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Bethnobile Gladys Mdimag..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


.....
Participant's signature

03/10/2019
.....
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

**INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION
(Participant)**

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
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3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

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 - c. there is a 5% chance of the risk materializing.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of an article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.
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11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Simangaliso Mxolisi Sibiyu have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


.....
Participant's signature

03/10/2019
.....
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

Khomo S from the Department of Education Psychology and Special Education, University of Zululand has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project, and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Refine Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students at a selected University in Kwa-Zulu Natal.
2. The University of Zululand has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards the Refinement of the Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year Bcom (Accounting) students.
4. I will participate in the project by answering the open ended interview questions.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

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9. I will receive feedback in the form of dissertation regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Sphelele Khomo.
11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Dube Andile have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

Andile Dube
Participant's signature

03/10/19
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

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I am aware that:

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12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Celo Precious Zungu, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


Participant's signature

03 October 2019
Date



ANNEXURE: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (Participant)

Project Title: Refining Academic Writing Skills for the Third Year BCom (Accounting) students at a selected University in KwaZulu-Natal

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I am aware that:

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11. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
12. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, Phelani Sydney Jali..... have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.


Participant's signature

03 October 2019
Date

APPENDIX D: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS SCHEDULE



Document Analysis Schedule

The students test and project will be analysed in order to ascertain whether or not they are following the grammatical rules such as:

1. Proper sentence structure
2. Vocabulary
3. Punctuation
4. Paragraphing
5. Spelling
6. Cohesion

APPENDIX E: WRITING CENTRE REPORT



AUDITING REPORT FROM THE WRITING CENTRE

The students test and project were analysed in order to ascertain whether or not the third year BCom (Accounting) students are complying with the grammatical rules such as proper sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, paragraphing, spelling and cohesion.

Analysis of Test Scripts

33 test scripts were analysed. The question and the solution was received.

1. Proper sentence structure

- Some sentences did not begin with a capital letter.
- Capital letters on words in the middle of a sentence
- Omission of joining words
- Addition words making sentences longer. When such words are omitted, the sentences still make sense and read well
- Singular words instead of plural and plural where there should be singular
- Past and future tenses not applied where necessary
 - Have - has
- Long sentences that lose meaning because multiple ideas are presented at once
- Confusion of relating to third person and object (it – them)
- Incorrect word order
- Excessive use of The and And in sentences
- Incomplete sentences
- Short writing of words
- The use of etc instead of 'and the like'
- Using signs instead of words
- Capital letter writing throughout the sentences

2. Vocabulary

Incorrect context of word usage:

- whether instead of either
- inquire to – inquire from
- duplicate of account numbers – duplication of ...

- does correspond to – corresponds with

Confusion of using:

- should and could
- Their – there
- They – there
- The – they
- With – within
- Does – if/ whether
- Keying - logging
- They - them
- Be – been
- Where – were
- E.g. – for example
- It's – it is
- Is – are
- In – at
- In – into
- Cant - cannot
- Last years – prior/previous year
- Inquire to personnel – inquire from personnel
- Month to month – monthly
- Week on week – weekly
- Too – as well
- Like this – such as
- In – on (vice versa)
- A – the (vice versa)
- That – then
- Y – why
- Enter – entering
- Away – a way
- Actual – actually
- i.e. – the following
- Mean – means
- There's – there is
- To – onto
- There fore – therefore
- Inputed – put
- External – externally
- Regard – regarding
- Comply – complies
- Approval – approved
- Official – officially
- Were – was

- Different – difference
- Update it – update itself
- Wont – will not
- For – about
- Companies rates – company's rates
- Existing – exists
- Appropriate allocated – appropriately allocated
- Do – does
- This – these
- Not correct – incorrect
- They're – they are
- Enquire – inquiry
- Trace back
- With deliver – with delivery
- Were delivery – were delivered

3. Punctuation

- Incorrect use of punctuation marks
- Using strokes instead of Or
- Incorrect comma placement
- Using commas where there should be full stops

4. Paragraphing

All responses to questions were in point form and therefore no paragraphs assessment could be made

5. Spelling

- Attact as opposed to attach
- Sea – see
- Loging - logging
- High light – highlight
- Acced – access
- Maybe – may be
- Hrs – hours
- NO. – numbers
- Id no. – Identification number/ ID number
- In – into
- On - onto
- Be – been
- Seniour – senior

- Logs - log
- Ever – every
- Write – right
- Bifore - before
- Reud – read
- Propary – prepared
- Employe – employee
- For – from
- Aproval – approval
- Revied - reviewed
- Mad – made
- Siniour – senior
- Whose – who is
- Lost – list
- Inspact – inspect
- Inquir – inquire
- Privious – previous
- Segration – segregation
- It specialist – IT specialist
- High – hire
- Auto - automatically
- Metings - meetings
- Pirioid – period
- Traineer – trainee
- Logs – logs
- Requently – frequently
- Prevellage – privilege
- Resollve – resolve
- Transfare – transfer
- Hass – has
- Use name – username
- Amendmend/ amendsmant – amendment
- Bases – basis
- Riched – reached
- Sected – selected
- Devoce - device

6. Cohesion

- Missing words within sentences interferes with cohesion
- Writing in point form (all the test scripts)

Analysis of 15 project

1. Proper sentence structure

- Poor differentiation of the English language rules of writing (plural and singular form)
- Long sentences
- Additional words that make sentences long but when removed the sentence makes sense
- Word contractions
- Capital letters at the beginning of sentences not applied and at the names of places.
- Sentences written in point form
- None formal language
- First person usage in the text
- No in-text references, reference list and incorrect citation style
- Incorrect word order
- Referring to objects in the third person
- Omission of joining words
- Starting sentences with small caps
- Incomplete sentences
- Improper use of tenses
- Excessive use of The throughout the documents
- The use of abbreviations in the assignment (etc)
- Word order in sentences incorrect
- Past and present tenses confused
- Informal language or phrases used (so they say)
- Use of emotional language

2. Vocabulary

Students tend to use informal words in academic text

- Gonna - is going to
- Etc
- IT techs – IT technicians

Words used in the wrong context

- we might not be sufficient enough to supply
- fail – failure
- has – have
- straight provide – promptly provide
- took – taken
- will – with

- local – locally
- yearly – annually
- all what – everything
- which – who
- simple – simply
- where – were
- any – each
- No more loyal
- Therefore – thereby
- Till – until
- Could – can
- About – of
- International – internationally
- Too – as well
- Worth – worthy
- Whether – if
- Passed - previous
- Ways around – getting around
- Satisfaction- satisfaction
- By – from

Word contractions

- you're – you are
- we've – we have
- these's – there is
- wont – will not
- don't – do not
- were – we are
- cant – can not
- its – it is
- whos – who is
- e.g. and i.e. – for example

3. Punctuation

- Poor punctuation: commas and full stops used incorrectly
- Capital letters beginning of sentences and names not applied

4. Paragraphing

- 6 assignment written in paragraphs
- Long sentences resulting in lose of meaning
- Tautology

- Point form writing

5. Spelling

- Students need to be motivated to use Spell Check
- Producing - production
- Credits cards – credit cards
- Choose – chosen
- Where else – whereas
- Maybe – may be
- This – these
- Clark – clerk
- Muster file – master file
- Refence – reference
- Do – does
- Embezziment – embezzlement
- Enivromental – environmental
- Or – our
- Vies - views
- Prospectus – prospective
- Choose – chose
- Wrote – written

6. Cohesion

- Long sentences and additional words in the sentences interfere with cohesion of the text.
- This forces the reader to reread the text in order to grasp the intended meaning
- More than one idea expressed in one sentence

7. Only 7 Assignments had Reference lists

- Incorrectly written references
- In text references not included in most assignments, where they are included, they are incorrectly written.

Other

It was interesting to observe that the students did not start with an opening paragraph and did not also have a conclusion paragraph. The same observation was made on the solution from the lecturer. There are students who did not follow the instruction of starting a new section on a new page.

APPENDIX F: PROOF OF REGISTRATION

Page 1 of 1



University of Zululand, Private Bag X1001, KwaDlangezwa, 3886
T: +27 35 902 6000/6646 W: www.unizulu.ac.za

Academic Record

Name : Khomo Sphelele
Student Number : 201860872
Identity Number : 7702150523086 Date Of Birth : 15-FEB-1977

Year : 2018 306ZZZ M. Ed
Annual Result :

Year : 2018 EMED02 MASTER OF EDUCATION (COURSEWORK)

Annual Result : PR PROMOTED TO NEXT LEVEL

YEAR: POST GRADUATE

EAP704	ARTICLE FOR PUBLICATION	NO RESULT
ECA703	COMPUTER APPLICATIONS	85 PASS WITH DISTINCTION
EDM705	MINI DISSERTATION FOR MASTERS DEGREE	NO RESULT
ERM702	RESEARCH METHODS	66 PASS WITH MERIT
ETC701	TEST CONSTRUCTION THEORY & PROJ MGMEN	80 PASS WITH DISTINCTION

Year : 2019 EMED02 MASTER OF EDUCATION (COURSEWORK)

Annual Result :

YEAR: POST GRADUATE

EAP704	ARTICLE FOR PUBLICATION	NO RESULT
EDM705	MINI DISSERTATION FOR MASTERS DEGREE	NO RESULT

I hereby declare that

Khomo Sphelele

was a registered student at this university during the above mentioned years and that his / her conduct was satisfactory.


for REGISTRAR
12-FEB-2020

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND
STUDENT ADMINISTRATION

12 FEB 2020

PRIVATE BAG X1001
KWADLANGEZWA, 3886

APPENDIX G: TURNITIN REPORT

REFINING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS FOR THE THIRD-YEAR BCOM (ACCOUNTING) STUDENTS AT A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

ORIGINALITY REPORT

4 %	4 %	1 %	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	languageinindia.com Internet Source	1 %
2	nrc.oakland.edu Internet Source	1 %
3	www.sciedu.ca Internet Source	1 %
4	researchbank.rmit.edu.au Internet Source	1 %
5	eprints.walisongo.ac.id Internet Source	1 %
6	www.physiology.org Internet Source	1 %

Exclude quotes Off
Exclude bibliography Off

Exclude matches < 1%