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An Investigation into Teachers' Attitudes toward Their Own Writing Through the Use of a Valid Writing Attitudes Instrument

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR
OWN WRITING THROUGH THE USE OF A VALID WRITING
ATTITUDES INSTRUMENT

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Faculty of Education
State University College at Brockport
in Partial Fullfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education

by

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if the investigator's perceptions of twelve teachers' attitudes toward their own writing matched their scores obtained from the Linn (1988) writing attitude scale.

Need for Study

"Teacher attitudes appear to have a significant effect upon student learning" (Spanjer & Layne, 1983, p. 5). Research has demonstrated that teacher attitudes can inhibit or inspire student achievement (Braun, 1976; Cantrell et al., 1977).

Cambourne (1988) suggests that there is plenty of evidence which indicates that very young children behave toward writing in very positive ways. "It is only as they go through school that these attitudes seem to change" (Cambourne, 1988, p. 195). Some research suggests that negative attitudes held by teachers towards the task of writing can easily be passed along to their students. "Children will learn what they are taught" (Smith, 1981, p. 797).

Spanjer and Layne (1983) propose that it is likely that the attitude a teacher has toward writing will influence their classroom approach to teaching writing. Gagne (1977) suggests that attitudes influence the choices of personal action made by an individual which in turn makes the action more or less probable.

"It can be concluded that teacher attitude, which is audibly and visibly reflected in teacher words and actions, is the single most important ingredient in a successful composition program for children" (Lickteig, 1981, p. 45). Teachers need to come to realize that "writing and reading competencies are heavily influenced by attitudes; a change in motivation can prompt major change in competency. (Casey, 1979, p.3).

"Many of the problems that teachers have with teaching writing surface in the statements about their attitudes towards the act of writing" (Blake, 1975, p. 3). "An early history of aversive conditioning, poor skill development and inadequate role models have been suggested as contributing to the development of writing apprehension (Daly, 1977a).

Gere and Smith (1979) believe that the way to improve language instruction is through serious attention to teachers' attitudes. "Teachers need to

examine their attitudes toward writing and compare their attitudes with those of effective, successful writers in order to acquire a more realistic idea of what the process of writing is all about" (Blake, 1975, p. 5).

Completing the Opinions About Writing (Linn, 1988) scale will enable a close examination to be made of the attitudes that teachers do have toward their own writing by answering the following questions.

Questions

1. Will teachers' writing attitude scores fall into the group hypothesized by the investigator?
2. If the teachers' scores do not fall into the hypothesized group, what are some of the factors that account for the discrepancy?
3. What are the teachers' reactions to the writing attitude instrument itself?

Definitions

Attitude- "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (Allport, 1935, p. 810).

Writing- "is the process of selecting, combining, arranging, and developing ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and often longer units of discourse" (NCTE Committee, 1979, p. 837).

Writer Apprehension- "a general avoidance of writing and situations perceived by the individual to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of the writing" (Daly & Miller, 1979, p. 37).

Writing Attitude- defined in this study as the score obtained from the Linn scale.

Summary

This investigation determined the relationship between teachers attitudes toward their own writing and their subjective classification as predicted by the investigator.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

While communication with others is one of the primary purposes of writing, it is not necessarily the major reason for it. Writing functions as a means for us to organize and understand our lives and world (Cambourne, 1988). "It is probably the most powerful, readily available form of extending thinking and learning that the human race has available to it" (Cambourne, 1988, p.184).

The ability to write is a highly valued skill in our society. This value placed on writing is evident when viewed in the context of the growing concern over the evaluation and teaching of writing in our public schools. Newsweek's "Why Johnny Can't Write" (December 8, 1975) gave evidence of declining scores on such national tests as the American College Testing Program, the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress. According to NAEP (1986) "writing achievement in 1984 seems to be no better than it was ten years earlier" (p.8). These

test scores, among others have contributed to an awareness of a writing crisis here in America.

This current concern over the writing deficiencies of students in our country has led many to take a closer look at those in charge of teaching writing: the teacher.

Robert Mitchell, author of The Graves of Academe (1981) feels that teachers of English who are in charge of teaching potential teachers of English are themselves illiterate. "No wonder Johnny can't write!," he states, "His teacher doesn't know how to write either." Another article, Time's "Help! Teacher Can't Teach!" (June 16, 1980) suggests that up to 20 percent of teachers simply have not mastered the basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Walmsley (1980) found that elementary school teachers have very little formal training in teaching writing. "While elementary classroom teachers are now being exhorted (in some cases, required) to give sustained attention to writing instruction, they appear to be significantly less well prepared to teach writing than they are to teach reading" (p. 732). According to the National Council of Teachers of English, it is possible for someone who wants to teach high school

English to go all the way through high school, college and advanced-education degrees without taking a single course in English composition. The late James Knapton, a former supervisor of remedial English at Berkeley thought the first step in helping illiteracy in our country must be to teach the English teachers themselves how to write. "If they don't know," he asked, "how on earth are they supposed to teach the children?" (Newsweek, 1975 p. 61). In the past, Blake (1975) reported that English and Language Arts teachers "have had no classes in writing other than high school and a college freshman composition course which seems, for the most part, to have turned them off to any further writing" (p. 3). Recent studies have suggested that writing is rarely used as a means of fostering learning and integrating new information with previous knowledge and experiences. This is partly due to the fact that as a profession we lack a clear understanding of the kinds of learning that writing can foster and because we lack explanations of how to plan and carry out such activities (Langer, Applebee, 1987).

With this lack of proper instruction in the teaching of writing, teachers tend to rely on what they themselves were taught; that the structure, style, and

quality of the product is what counts. Grammar, spelling and punctuation tend to be a top priority when evaluating a written piece. However, James Squire (cited in Graves, 1977) states:

Composing is not spelling. It is not grammar, not usage, not manuscript, not penmanship, not writing neat little snatches of perfectly formed sentences. It is neither writing with "two inch margins," nor with perfect alignment. It is not rhetorical analysis of selected passages, not is it completing a careful sequence of exercises on paragraph organization. Composing is none of these things (p. 819).

Despite Squires statement, teachers still tend to focus on the mechanics of a student's piece of writing, rather than the meaning. Without proper training, teachers have no other alternative than to rely on their own exposure as students to writing; thus, many teachers tend to have a mis-construed viewpoint or attitude towards what writing is and can be all about.

"It may be that until school writing activities are presented as a means of accomplishing personal and school-related goals, they will have a limited effect on students' performance and achievement" (Applebee, 1986, p. 61). "Effective teaching of writing is an essential component in any successful school program: to improve the teaching of writing, particularly in the

context of academic tasks, is also to improve the quality of thinking required of school children" (Langer, Applebee, 1987, p.11).

Attitudes

Attitudes as defined by Allport (1935, p. 810) refer to "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related." Attitudes do not determine particular actions; rather, they make certain individual actions more or less probable (Gagne, 1985). People can feel good, pro or favorable, or bad, anti, or unfavorable toward an attitude object (Trandis, Adamopoulos, Brinberg 1984). The complexity that exists between human action and attitudes makes assessing their attainment and modification very difficult (Gagne, 1985). In other words, to be sure that one is measuring a change in attitude as a result of learning rather than something else, is not an easy task.

Most attitudes are learned incidentally rather than as a result of preplanned instruction (Gagne, 1985). "Conditions that form and modify attitudes

surround the individual constantly, from birth onward" (Gagne, 1985, p. 220). Most attitudes acquired early on in life are found to be difficult to change. They are said to be "remarkably persistent" (Gagne, 1985, p. 220).

While many attitudes are acquired in the home, Gagne (1984) also admits that "there is a definite expectation that some attitudes will be learned or strengthened in the school" (p.220) as well.

Aspects of Attitudes

Triandis (1971) sees attitudes as encompassing three different aspects: 1) a cognitive aspect, which pertains to the idea; 2) an affective aspect, pertaining to the emotion or feeling that accompanies the idea; and 3) a behavioral aspect which pertains to the predisposition to action. These aspects are considered to "characterize the internal states that are the learned attitudes" (Gagne, 1985). Each of these states has an affective, a cognitive and a behavioral component. While many theorists disagree as to which of these three aspects is primary or which is

the cause of the others, they do in fact agree that they are all involved in the make up of attitudes.

The cognitive aspect of attitudes is based on the premise that there is a need for consistency. Human individuals strive for consistency in their own thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behavior (Gagne, 1985). Basically when one experiences inconsistency among his/her beliefs, there is usually a strive to achieve consistency. Within this process, a change in attitude may occur.

The affective aspect of an attitude, that which pertains to the emotion or feeling that accompanies an idea, can vary from "positive" to "negative." According to Triandis (1971), these positive and negative tendencies tend to fall under two dimensions. The first dimension deals with the tendency to seek or avoid contact with the person or object of the attitude. The second dimension relates to the liking or disliking (of the person or object of the attitude).

Since an attitude can be defined in plain terms as a readiness to respond, can we then predict the behavior of one based solely on the attitude that he/she possesses? This A-B relationship of attitudes and behavior has been an important question in attitude

research over many years. Very often people do not do what they would like to do. Humans often tend to do what is legal, moral or ethical or what has good consequences in the long run. People often learn how to act in different situations by being exposed to rewards and punishments. Much of what we learn is a direct result of observations of others who have been rewarded or punished for certain actions (Triandis, Adamopoulos, Brinberg, 1984). A classic study was conducted by La Piere (1934) in which he and a Chinese couple traveled through the United States. They stopped at 66 different hotels and motels and dined at 184 restaurants. They were refused service only once during their entire trip. Six months later, La Piere sent out letters to every hotel, motel and restaurant visited during their trip. He also sent the same letter to a similar "control" group which had not been visited. 92 percent of the replies received indicated that they would not serve Chinese guests. The results of this study show a remarkable discrepancy between attitudes expressed and the actual behavior exhibited. Other studies have been conducted that display similar results: an absence of any high degree of relationship

between attitudes as reported by responses to questions and actual behavior (Triandis, 1971).

While some researchers are hesitant to acknowledge a close relationship between attitudes and behavior; and despite earlier studies to the contrary, contemporary attitude researchers do see a connection between the two. Although it may be impossible to predict behaviors from attitude, attitude and behavior are correlates (Schuman and Johnson 1976). Schuman and Johnson (1976) write, "Far from it being difficult to obtain a reliable A-B association, few plausible studies fail to find significant relationships" (p. 167). Attitudes are said to be reciprocal (Meyers, 1987). Attitudes may follow behavior and behaviors may be influenced by attitudes. "Attitudes predispose actions; actions shape attitudes" (Triandis, Adamopoulos, Brinberg, 1984).

Attitude Change

Most attitudes are learned through experiences with other people and events. Some attitudes can be changed or altered rather quickly as a result of just one experience or they may undergo a gradual change over a period of time as a result of a series of

experiences (Gagne, 1985). The three major types of learning situations that exist which produce attitude learning, classical conditioning, operant conditioning and human modeling, all provide situations which warrant the learning of attitudes (Gagne, 1985).

Attitudes are acquired by classical conditioning in the sense that an object takes on an emotional meaning (Stats, 1967). Here, one can produce learned emotional reactions to stimuli (Gagne, 1985). In a study conducted by Watson and Rayner (1920) an unconditioned stimulus for "fear" (sound of striking a metal bar) was paired with a conditioned stimulus (a rat). Thus, a newly conditioned response was learned in a child (withdrawing from rats). It is generally believed that many irrational fears one might have probably arose through the accidental pairing of stimuli during childhood (Gagne, 1985). These attitudes formed in younger years may persist for many years and can be very difficult to change or alter.

Operant conditioning involves the use of reinforcement as a means of learning attitudes. To Skinner reinforcement means a particular arrangement of stimulus and response conditions that bring about the learning of a new association. A response that one

wants an individual to learn must be made contingent on the occurrence of certain stimulus conditions, which in turn bring about another response (Skinner, 1969).

Studies show that favorable attitudes may be established through the use of reinforcement contingencies (Gagne, 1985). Many favorable attitudes evolve from experiences with success. Many everyday experiences demonstrate the need for success in order to maintain a positive attitude. The child who has not yet met success in swimming underwater, tends not to "like to swim underwater." Yet attitudes can change quickly to the positive once success has been achieved. This holds true in educational situations as well. "Attitudes of dislike result from repeated instances of failure (Gagne, 1985, p. 231).

Human modeling is said to be "one of the most dependable sets of events that has been found to produce changes in attitudes" (Gagne, 1985, p.232). Here learning takes place by an imitation of the model's behavior. The learner can acquire an attitude that reflects the attitude the human model expressed or demonstrated (Gagne,1985). Studies of attitude change through human modeling suggest that human beings play an essential role for learning attitudes. Learners

acquire a "conception" or "image" of the model (Gagne, 1985). The attitude acquired is not necessarily limited to the actual behavior exhibited by the model, but can be generalized to other situations and behavior (Bandura and McDonald, 1963; Bandura and Mischel, 1965; as cited in Gagne, 1985).

Teachers Involvement in Writing

The term "writing apprehension" is defined as "a general avoidance of writing and situations perceived by the individual to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing" (Daly & Miller, 1975, p. 37). Analysis of data derived from a study conducted by Claypool (1980) suggests that teachers across the curriculum who are apprehensive about writing assign fewer writing tasks than teachers who are not. The findings of Claypool's study indicate that "measures need to be taken to lower the writing anxiety of teachers while encouraging them to make greater use of writing in their classrooms (Claypool, 1980, p. 11). "It must also be realized that students seem to sense any underlying cynicism a teacher may have about the

subject matter" (Christensen, 1983, p.13). Donald Graves (cited in Perez, 1983) states:

Writing is extolled, worried over, cited as a national priority, but seldom practiced. The problem with writing is not poor spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting. The problem with writing is no writing.

Jayne Freeman (cited in Perez, 1983) writes:

I do believe many of us do not teach writing with the same continuity and confidence with which we approach reading and math. However, ...this is not our fault. We don't teach writing because we don't know how.

Frank Smith suggests that the greatest myth of all about who is able to teach writing is the one that "...people who do not themselves enjoy and practice writing can teach children how to write" (1981, p.797). Another myth is expressed by Mauree Applegate (cited in Perez, 1983) when she writes:

You can teach children to paint and draw effectively without being an artist, can't you? A teacher is an artist at releasing the arts and abilities in others, not in herself. Creative writing cannot be taught; it can only be released and guided. A teacher of creative writing needs to stimulate children to write, not to be a writer herself. Often the quietest teachers are the most stimulating. No indeed! A teacher need not be talented in writing to lead children to write (1967, p.149).

It may be that a factor that may contribute to the writing problem here in our country is that our

teachers all too often do not write or do not write well? If we are going to improve our students' writing in this country, then our teachers must write themselves. Teachers should join students in their writing. In doing so, "writing becomes a meaningful "teaching" and "learning" experience for both student and teacher" (Gardner, 1985, p.8).

According to Casey (1979) English educators participating in a two day workshop were asked to brainstorm why students have a hard time writing. Answers provided by these educators were: "They are ignorant"; "They don't know anything"; "They can't organize"; "They can't internalize the process". These responses suggest that many teachers free themselves from the responsibility of the writing problem this country is faced with. Teachers who release themselves from the responsibility of their students' writing cannot be effective teachers of writing. "It is unreasonable, however, to expect them to respect students when preservice and inservice trainers too often have not taught teachers to respect themselves as learners" (Casey, 1979, p. 2). "The burden of student writing then, is the teacher's, much as we try to pass the buck" (Casey, 1979, p.4). Therefore, teachers need

to come to realize that "writing and reading competencies are heavily influenced by attitudes; a change in motivation can prompt major changes in competency (Casey, 1979, p. 3).

"The writer who knows the craft of writing can't walk into a room and work with students unless there is some understanding of the craft of teaching. Neither can teachers who have not wrestled with writing, effectively teach the writer's craft" (Graves, 1983, p. 6). Based on this statement by Graves, it is safe to assume that teachers need to become aware of their own literacy. They need to evaluate their own beliefs and attitudes toward writing. Graves suggests that teachers' discovery of literacy has begun to parallel that of their students. He also suggests however, that this turn around can only be possible when teachers make the commitment to do something about their own literate engagement. Graves (1990) describes the experiences of one teacher who tried to get in tune with her own literacy:

I hadn't been doing enough writing myself to know what a real writer does. I think I was relying on my past history with teachers myself. I waited for their topics, waited for the teacher to fix it, recopied their corrections, then handed it in for a grade. I knew that wasn't right, because I

never felt like a writer when I wrote under those conditions (p.8).

"Significant learning is that which changes attitudes and behavior. It must be both self-discovered and self-appropriate" (Rogers,1969,p.24). "The very stance teachers take toward the world through personal learning and inquiry, the "why" questions they trigger because they wonder about the world are the strongest contributors to the literate climate of their classrooms (Graves, 1990 p.36). Casey (1979) suggests that before teachers who do not trust either their own nor their students' writing abilities can become self-confident teachers of writing, they need to be involved in a long-term inservice program in which the trainers respect for themselves as learners is evident (p. 1). One teacher, after having taken a writing workshop directed by Mara Casey described her own feelings:

It had never occurred to me that it might be desirable to write along with my students. When it did, I had to overcome a great reluctance stemming from anxiety. How would my writing bear up under fourth grade scrutiny? However, after writing for this class, (workshop) I am as brave as I have come to realize my fourth graders are every time they sit down to write.

Since human modeling is found to be so effective in the learning of attitudes, it seems safe to assume

that teachers can play a large part in the achievement of positive attitudes towards writing for their students. "Teachers who enjoy writing themselves are also the best writing models for children (Perez,1983, p. 848). Teachers should share their good thoughts and feelings about writing. Involvement and enthusiasm for writing is contagious (Perez, 1983).

Modeling helps teachers understand their own writing. Because they model their own personal involvement with the elements of the writing process, they will have a better idea of what to look for in their students.

Before I wrote with my students and, consequently, learned how to write, I didn't have anything to teach. I was the classic case of the blind leading the blind. Worse, I was standing on the sidelines telling them where to go (Peckham, 1980, p. 52).

"They see differently because they have been through the writing process, composing the words before the children" (Graves, 1983,p.50). Graves (1983) also states: "They can't teach without showing what they mean. There is a process to follow. There is a process to learn. That is the way it is with a craft, whether it be teaching or writing" (p.6). "A teacher uses modeling to confirm the commonality of all

writers, as well as to confirm new approaches by the child in the writing process" (Graves, 1983, p. 50). Through the use of modeling, students are able to select skills to work on that are relevant to them. These skills are easier to select because they are shown within the context of the natural process of writing.

Lickteig suggests that humans, as well as other species, responds to and are influenced by their environments. Within these environments students are able to build a more positive attitude toward both themselves and school.

The primary quality of the learning environment is a warm and supportive atmosphere. It is in a supportive milieu that one can afford to take a risk, experiment with ideas and materials, and even make a mistake. It is this same supportive atmosphere which fosters a positive self-concept in students (Lickteig, 1981, p.46).

The Massachusetts Assessment of Student Performance in Writing, 1975-1976, found students who had positive attitudes towards school and who perceived their schools as friendly places, performed better on writing tasks than students with negative attitudes (Casey, 1979).

How Teachers Can Learn to Write

"When the teacher assumes new functions and exhibits different behaviors, so does his students." As soon as teachers willingly see themselves as effective writers, so will their students (Postman and Weingartner, 1969, p. 38). How then do teachers learn to write? Despite the vast amounts of literature available on the topic of literacy, teachers should look within themselves and make the commitment to actually write. "Writing is best learned by doing" (Perez, 1983, p.849). One of the easiest ways for teachers to learn how to write is to actually write with their students and be willing to share their written pieces with their students for evaluation (Peckham, 1980). Irvin Peckham describes his first experience in sharing his writing with his students:

Writing my first story was pure torture. My pen wouldn't move, my characters wouldn't talk, my action wouldn't develop, but I finally succeeded in chiseling four drafts out of stone. I sweated over that story, read it out loud, listened for awkward phrases, unsplit my infinitives, eliminated overworked adverbs and looked up the spelling of every questionable word. Frightened that my students would discover I couldn't write my way out of a paper bag, I put my opus out with the stack of student stories. As nervous as any student, I retrieved my story at the end of the day and quickly looked at the comments on the back. Thank God, they said they liked it. I didn't care that I was the teacher and they were

the students, a relationship demanding positive comments. To me the compliments were sincere. I read the story again, and I knew it was okay. I felt beautiful. I could write (1980, p.52).

Another statement made by Peckham (1980) gives support to us all:

We all have something to say and can learn how to say it so that others will listen. I have buried that myth about the gifted writer, that either you have it or you don't. Writing is a craft first, an art second: a craft because one must learn techniques that requires hard work and patience; an art because the result is beautiful, a celebration of the soul (52).

"Teachers who write have something very important to teach" (Perez, 1983, p. 849).

Chapter III

Design

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if the investigator's perceptions of twelve teachers' attitudes toward their own writing matched their scores obtained from the Linn (1988) writing attitude scale.

Questions

1. Will teachers' writing attitude scores fall into the group hypothesized by the investigator?
2. If the teachers' scores do not fall into the hypothesized group, what are some of the factors that account for the discrepancy?
3. What are the teachers' reactions to the writing attitude instrument itself?

Materials

Materials for this investigation will include:

1. A list of twelve elementary teachers classified as six positive and six negative in attitudes toward their own writing.
2. Opinions About Writing scale by Jeffrey Linn (1988).

3. One set of questions designed by the investigator to be used with the subjects during their individual interviews upon completion of the writing attitude scale.
4. Tape recorder and audio tape to record subjects' replies to questions as mentioned above.

Methodology

Twelve elementary teachers from a public western New York school district who agreed to participate in this study were classified by the investigator as six who are positive and six who are negative toward their own writing. The classification of the subjects was based on the investigator's experience and professional knowledge of the subjects.

Factors which influenced the investigator to pick the subjects as either positive or negative in attitude varied. Those who were hypothesized as having a negative attitude appeared to not value writing as much as those hypothesized as being positive. Written pieces displayed in classrooms also influenced placement of the subjects. Those who were thought to hold a negative attitude toward their own writing displayed less written pieces in their classroom as

compared to those who were predicted to be positive in attitude. Discussions held during inservice workshops were also taken into account. Those who willingly shared their own writing as well as opinions about the skill of writing were thought to have a positive attitude. Whereas, those who rarely spoke their opinions about writing or shared their own writing were hypothesized as having a negative attitude.

To show interrater reliability, two experienced, district personnel were chosen to rate the same twelve teachers following the same procedure as the investigator. The two raters were chosen based on their professional knowledge of the subjects' feelings and opinions toward writing.

A comparison of the interraters' classification was then made by the investigator. A percentage of agreement of .85 or above is considered satisfactory for most interrater reliability investigations (Borg, W.; Gall, M.; 1983, p. 479). The Opinions About Writing scale was then administered to the twelve subjects with the investigator present. The subjects were asked to answer each of the seventeen items as honestly and truthfully as possible. The scales were hand scored by the investigator following the scoring

procedures of the Linn writing attitude scale. Possible scores ranged from 17 (the lowest possible score) to 85 (the highest possible score). Scores falling between 52 and 85 were interpreted as a positive attitude towards writing. Scores falling between 17 and 51 were interpreted as a negative attitude towards writing.

Next, individual interviews were conducted by the investigator with those whose scores did not fall as hypothesized, as well as with two subjects whose scores did fall as predicted; one negative and one positive. Four open-ended questions, designed by the investigator, were asked during the interviews to provide the subjects with the opportunity to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings while completing the writing attitude scale. Reactions to the writing attitude scale were recorded, as well as any information which may account for those scores which did not fall into the group hypothesized by the investigator.

Summary

Twelve elementary school teachers from a public western New York school district were administered the Opinions About Writing scale to determine what their actual attitudes are toward their own writing in relation to their subjective classification predicted by the investigator.

Chapter IV
Analysis of Data
Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if the investigator's perceptions of twelve teachers' attitudes toward their own writing matched their scores obtained from the Linn (1988) writing attitude scale.

In this chapter, a review of the procedures followed and data collected in this study will take place. A close look at the categorization of the twelve subjects into six positive and six negative in attitude toward their own writing by the investigator and interraters will be provided. The percentage of agreement of the interrater's classification obtained in this study will also be stated.

All subjects' scores obtained from the Linn (1988) Opinions About Writing scale will be discussed so as to clearly display the actual category the subjects fell into and how these compared with the predictions made by the investigator.

Next, any discrepancies found between the categories predicted by the investigator and the actual

placement obtained will be discussed. Factors that may account for these discrepancies will be addressed.

Finally, results of the individual interviews conducted will be reviewed. The information taken from these interviews will show the subject's thoughts and feelings while completing the writing attitude scale, any suggestions for improving the scale, as well as any information which may account for a discrepancy between the investigator's hypothesis and the actual score obtained.

Results

Interrater Reliability

To show interrater reliability, two experienced district personnel were chosen to rate the twelve teachers using the same procedure as the investigator. Six of the subjects were placed in the positive attitude towards their own writing category, and the other six in the negative attitude category. A percentage of agreement was then calculated. A percentage of agreement of .83 was obtained for this study. While this percentage was not quite within the

range stated in chapter 3 (.85) it was accepted by the investigator due to its relative closeness.

Question #1

1. Will teachers' writing attitude scores fall into the group hypothesized by the investigator?

Subject #1 was placed in the negative attitude category by the investigator and both interraters. The total score obtained by the subject was 44. This placed the subject in the "negative attitude towards ones own writing" category. Therefore, the investigator's hypothesis was correct. Subject #2, was placed in the positive category by both the investigator and one interrater. The subject scored a total of 71. This score fell at the high end of the positive attitude category. Therefore, the subject's score agreed with the hypothesis of the investigator.

Subject #3 was hypothesized as negative by the investigator and one interrater. The subject's total score was 29. This score fell within the low end of the negative category, thus falling as predicted.

Subject #4 was predicted by the investigator and one interrater as being negative towards his/her own writing. The subject's total score was 62. This score fell within the high end of the positive category. This score showed a discrepancy between what was hypothesized by the investigator and the actual placement.

Subject #5 was hypothesized by the investigator and both interraters as falling into the negative category. The subject scored a total of 33. This score fell at the low end of the negative category, thus falling as predicted.

Subject #6 was predicted as falling into the negative category, again by the investigator and one interrater. The subject's total score was 66 which fell in the positive category. This score showed a discrepancy between what was predicted and the actual placement.

Subject #7 was hypothesized by the investigator and one interrater as being positive in attitude. The total score obtained by this subject was 58. This score fell at the lower end of the positive category, yet still within range of what was hypothesized.

Subject #8 was believed to score within the positive range by both the investigator and one interrater. The total score obtained by this subject was 64, placing the subject in the positive category as predicted.

Subject #9 was hypothesized by the investigator and one interrater as being positive in attitude. The subject's total score obtained was 70 which fell at the high end of the positive category. This subject's score reflected that hypothesized by the investigator.

Subject #10 was hypothesized by the investigator and both interraters as falling into the negative category. The subject scored 40 in total which is found to be at the lower end of the negative category.

Subject #11's hypothesized grouping was agreed upon by both the interraters and the investigator. The prediction was that of a positive attitude. As predicted, the subject did fall in the positive category with a total score of 53. Although this score fell at the lower end of the positive category it did qualify as agreeing with the investigator's prediction.

Subject #12 was predicted by the investigator and both of the interraters as positive in attitude. The total score obtained by the subject was 56. Although

this score also falls at the lower end of the positive category, it did fall as predicted.

Question #2

If the teachers' scores do not fall into the hypothesized group, what are some of the factors that account for the discrepancy?

Subjects #4 and #6 showed a discrepancy between the placement that was predicted by the investigator and where they actually fell. Both subjects were thought to have negative attitudes toward their own writing but scored within the positive category.

Reasons for these two discrepancies vary. First and foremost, the one factor that may account for the discrepancies seen with these two subjects is error in pre-assessment on the part of the investigator in regards to these two subjects' attitudes. Next, one subject (#4) admitted to having some confusion with the scale. The questions asked were too vague for this subject as s/he felt they should have been more precise in terms of the type of writing being discussed. The other subject (#6) admitted to writing a lot for enjoyment, yet admitted to not thoroughly feeling

confident when asked to share information in front of groups of people. Both subjects are new teachers to the particular grade level they teach. Both admitted to feeling abit unsure of themselves at this time in regards to teaching writing to their students as the grade level curriculum is so new. Thus, little writing is seen being displayed within their classrooms.

Question #3

What are the teachers' reactions to the writing attitude instrument itself?

Four subjects were individually interviewed by the investigator after completing the writing attitude scale. The two subjects whose scores showed a discrepancy, (subject #4 and #6) were chosen; as well as subjects #3, whose score fell at the low end of the negative category and #2, whose score fell at the high end of the positive category. Subjects were asked four questions which allowed them the opportunity to elaborate on the writing instrument itself. (See Appendix C)

Subject #4 was predicted by the investigator to fall into the negative attitude category. Despite this

prediction, the subject scored a 62 which placed him/her at the high end of the positive category.

This subject had some difficulty completing the scale because it did not specify what type of writing it was addressing. The suggestion was made to perhaps categorize the questions according to what type of writing should be thought of. This subject did not find this writing instrument to be actually useful because s/he was already aware of how they personally felt about writing; very positive. This subject spends most free time writing letters to friends and family. S/hè feels very confident about writing, regardless of the type. S/he majored in English in college and always did very well with creative writing, as well as essay tests and research papers.

This subject had some difficulty with questions #3, #11 and #16 in regards to its implications of sharing. Again, this subject felt these questions should specify what type of writing is being addressed. For example, if the survey is addressing letter writing, then sharing with others is important, enjoyable and not at all intimidating, as that is what it is intended for. But, should the type of writing be personal, like diary writing, then sharing its contents

could be very intimidating and an overall uncomfortable experience for the writer, as that is not what it is intended for.

Subject #6 scored a 66 which placed him/her at the high end of the positive category. This showed a discrepancy between what was predicted by the investigator and which category the subject actually fell into. When interviewed this subject admitted to having no problem with the scale. This subject spends alot of time writing for enjoyment. Most personal writing tends to be done in the form of letter writing as well as diary writing. When asked if any suggestions could be made to improve the scale, this subject said "No, I took the questions quite generally." This subject did not feel that the questions should be catagorized. "I did not need to know what type of writing was being discussed because I enjoy all kinds of writing."

Subject #3 was predicted by the investigator to fall into the negative additude category. This subject scored a 29 which placed him/her at the low end of the negative category. This subject was chosen by the investigator to be interviewed to find out what

thoughts and feelings were going through his/her mind while completing the writing attitudes scale.

This subject had no problem with the writing instrument. He/she did not find confusion with any questions. When asked what type of writing was being thought of while completing the scale, the subject replied, "Any or all types of writing." The subject then elaborated on that statement by explaining that no matter what type of writing is done, he/she does not enjoy it or feel confident about it.

This subject does not write anything unless placed in a situation where it is required. Sharing writing with others is a very intimidating experience for this subject. He/she will avoid situations where this may have to take place, regardless of whether it is done orally or through written means. When asked if this writing attitudes inventory was useful at all, the subject replied "I suppose it confirmed my negative feelings about writing."

Subject #2 was chosen to be interviewed because the score obtained from the writing attitudes scale was found to be at the high end of the positive category. This score fell as predicted by the investigator.

This subject also had some difficulty with answering various questions on the writing scale due to its vagueness in the types of writing it was addressing. This subject felt it would have been beneficial if the questions were categorized according to different types of writing. Questions regarding sharing; #3, #11 and #16 were difficult to answer for this subject as "It depends on what type of writing I'm doing." This subject does not mind sharing functional writing (e.g. reports) as it is not a reflection on him/her. . Sharing personal writing (e.g. poems) is a bit more intimidating, yet not worth avoiding.

This subject enjoys writing for pleasure yet, unfortunately finds little time to do so. This subject sees teachers faced with vast amounts of functional writing tasks which seem to take precedence over inspirational writing.

This subject would have liked to have been able to elaborate on all of these questions in writing while completing the writing scale. One recommendation he/she had for improving the survey was to allow answers to be written, rather than done through a multiple choice method.

Summary

Ten out of the twelve subjects in this investigation correctly fell into the positive or negative category in attitude toward their own writing as predicted by the investigator. Two subjects showed discrepancies between the placement that was predicted by the investigator and where they actually fell. Error in pre-assessment on the part of the investigator, subjects' confusion with the writing attitude instrument, as well as uncertainty to a new grade level curriculum were noted as being factors which may account for these two discrepancies.

Reactions to the writing attitude instrument itself suggest that some modifications should perhaps be made to help specify the type of writing each question is addressing.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if the investigator's perceptions of twelve teachers' attitudes toward their own writing matched their scores obtained from the Linn (1988) writing attitude scale.

Conclusions

Ten out of twelve subjects' attitudes toward their own writing were in fact as the investigator predicted; either positive or negative. The foremost possible reason for this close accuracy was that the subjects chosen for this investigation were well known by the investigator.

The investigator and the subjects had a close professional relationship in an educational setting for over three years. Various conversations and informal observations with these subjects had taken place over the course of the three years. These conversations and observations enabled the investigator to form her own opinions toward these subjects, in regard to their thoughts and feelings toward the act of writing. Thus, these opinions were the basis of the investigator's perceptions.

The closeness in accuracy of the investigator's perceptions of ten out of twelve subjects' attitudes also gives support for the validity of the Linn writing instrument itself.

Reasons for the two subjects who did not fall as predicted by the investigator vary. One very possible reason for the discrepancies is error in pre-assessment of the subjects' attitudes toward writing on the part of the researcher. The conversations and informal observations made by the researcher over the three year period were perhaps misread. Also, there may have been some confusion with the writing attitudes instrument itself on the part of the subjects. The subjects may have been uncertain as to the specific type of writing that was being addressed by the instrument. Finally, both subjects were new at the particular grade level they were teaching in at the time this study took place. Both subjects admitted to being a bit uncertain of the new grade level curriculum.

Implications for Research

Further research could deal with the limitations which existed for this study. The percentage of agreement obtained in this study did not fall exactly within the range considered satisfactory (.85 or

above) for most interrater reliability investigations (Borg, W.; Gall, M.; 1983, p. 479). Perhaps some modifications could be made to assure that the percentage of agreement fall at .85 or above. A larger number of educators could be investigated. All subjects could be interviewed to get a more precise interpretation of their thoughts and feelings while taking the attitude survey. Questions relating to why the subjects have the attitude that they do toward writing could be looked at. Investigations could be made into the actual teaching practices of the subjects with positive and negative attitudes towards their own writing. Studies could be conducted to see if teachers' attitudes toward their own writing influence the attitudes of their students toward their own writing. Assurance of reliability and validity could be established through some revision of the attitude scale and interview questions. The scale itself may need to be changed to focus on the type of specific writing it is addressing. Future research could also take a look at various factors as they relate to attitudes toward writing.

Implications for Classroom Practice

Do teachers' attitudes toward their own writing influence their approach to teaching writing? When a teacher feels very confident toward the act of writing, is it not safe to assume that much time will be spent on teaching students how to write? Will these teachers not approach the teaching of writing with enthusiasm, confidence and the knowledge of its importance? Will they not have the patience and ability to aid those students who have difficulty with writing? Will their students not learn from them?

Likewise, will those teachers who have a poor attitude toward the act of writing, spend less time teaching students how to write? Will the enthusiasm for writing be there for their students to see? Will their lack of confidence toward the act of writing rub off onto their students? Will the patience be there to help those students who may have some difficulty with writing? Will their students learn from them?

Summary

This chapter has considered implications for education and for further research. Closeness in accuracy of the investigator's perceptions of ten out of twelve subjects' attitudes also shows support for the validity of the Linn writing attitude instrument. Limitations of the study were included with suggestions for modifications for further investigations into teachers' attitudes toward writing.

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APPENDIX A

Interrater Reliability Classification

<u>SUBJECTS</u>	<u>RATER #1</u>	<u>RATER #2</u>	<u>INVESTIGATOR</u>
1	NEG.	NEG.	NEG.
2	NEG.	POS.	POS.
3	POS.	NEG.	NEG.
4	POS.	NEG.	NEG.
5	NEG.	NEG.	NEG.
6	POS.	NEG.	NEG.
7	NEG.	POS.	POS.
8	POS.	POS.	POS.
9	NEG.	POS.	POS.
10	NEG.	NEG.	NEG.
11	POS.	POS.	POS.
12	POS.	POS.	POS.

APPENDIX B

CATEGORIZATION OF SUBJECTS-PRE/POST INVESTIGATION

<u>SUBJECTS</u>	<u>PREDICTION</u>	<u>OBTAINMENT</u>
1	NEG.	NEG.
2	POS.	POS.
3	NEG.	NEG.
4	NEG.	POS.***
5	NEG.	NEG.
6	NEG.	POS.***
7	POS.	POS.
8	POS.	POS.
9	POS.	POS.
10	NEG.	NEG.
11	POS.	POS.
12	POS.	POS.

*** Discrepancy shown between investigator's prediction and scores obtained.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What type of writing were you thinking of while you were filling out this writing attitudes inventory?
2. In what way, if any, was this writing attitudes inventory useful to you?
3. Do you have any suggestions to improve this writing attitudes inventory?
4. As you were completing the writing attitudes inventory, were you at all confused by any questions?

APPENDIX D

INTERPRETATION OF SUBJECTS' SCORES

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>SCORE OBTAINED</u>	<u>HYPOTHESIZED PLACEMENT</u>	<u>ACTUAL PLACEMENT</u>
1	44	NEG.	NEG.
2	71	POS.	POS.
3	29	NEG.	NEG.
4	62	NEG.	POS. **
5	33	NEG.	NEG.
6	66	NEG.	POS. **
7	58	POS.	POS.
8	64	POS.	POS.
9	70	POS.	POS.
10	40	NEG.	NEG.
11	53	POS.	POS.
12	56	POS.	POS.

** Discrepancy shown between investigator's prediction and actual placement obtained.