



# Teaching Writing in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Teachers' Attitude toward the Teaching of Writing and Their Writing Self-efficacy

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**Abstract:** This study sought to determine English Language teachers' writing self-efficacy and attitude towards the teaching of essay writing in secondary schools in Nigeria. Two research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. Sixty (60) English Language teachers (21 males and 38 females) in senior secondary schools in Benin City, Nigeria formed the sample for the study. The "Questionnaire on Teachers' Attitude toward the Teaching of Writing and Writing Self-Efficacy (QTASE)" was used in the collection of data. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and ANOVA were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that teachers have negative attitude towards the teaching of essay writing and have low writing self-efficacy. In addition, there were significant differences in teachers' attitude toward the teaching of essay writing and their writing self-efficacy based on gender and qualification. However, teachers' writing self-efficacy did not differ based on qualification. Recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** Teaching writing, Writing self-efficacy, Attitude towards the teaching of writing, ESL, Secondary school

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is an important means of communication. In today's technology-driven society, those who command both spoken and written skills enjoy a superior social position in comparison to those who handle only the form of speech (Tribble, 1996). For students in academic institutions, the ability to write is necessary not only for academic success, but also for better preparation into the modern workforce – one which places a heavy emphasis on proficient literacy skills (Chase, 2011).

Writing is a complex task which requires the coordination of fine motor skills and cognitive skills; it also reflects the social and cultural patterns of the writer's time (Fisher, 2010; Myhill & Fisher, 2012). It is perhaps the most difficult language skill as it builds on the other three skills – listening, speaking and reading. Therefore, it is not surprising that many find writing a difficult task. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) note that "probably half of the world's population does not know how to write adequately and effectively" (p. 87). Similarly, Negari (2011) contends that writing in a second or foreign language seems to be the most difficult skill for language learners to acquire in academic contexts. The same difficulty arises in teaching writing.

Huot (2002) notes that writing is difficult for teachers to teach and assess. Similarly, Sitko (1998) observes that teachers and teacher educators would probably agree that teaching writing may be the most complex activity of all.

In the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, the teaching of writing as a language skill is done by the English Language teachers. English Language is a compulsory subject at all levels of education. English also serves as the medium of instruction for other content areas. In addition, in order to gain admission into any tertiary institution in Nigeria, students must obtain at least a credit pass in English Language at the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE). The SSCE is conducted by examining bodies such as The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and The National Examinations Council (NECO). Students who lack good writing skill will be unable to obtain the minimum pass required as the section (Paper 1) testing the writing skill carries the most marks (60%) of the examination. Students' ability to write the following types of essay genres are tested: narrative, expository, descriptive, debate/argumentative, speech, article, and formal and informal letters.



However, reports about students' writing in Nigeria have consistently revealed that students are predominantly deficient in this area. For example, Okedara and Odeh (2000) note that students' performance in the essay paper writing at the senior secondary school has been poor. Similarly, Adedeji (2008) observes that the level of educational achievement in terms of competency in written English in the country's schools has been quite low. The WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports have consistently revealed that candidates who sit for the examinations perform poorly in writing. For example, the report of 2008 states that despite the deliberate attempt made to give candidates tests within their experiences and capabilities, their essays were marred by errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. The report continues that some of the candidates' expressions were generally gibberish or inappropriate to the examination context. In addition, some candidates merely translated their mother tongue into English Language. Subsequent years have shown no significant improvement in candidates' general performance (WAEC, 2017).

Several reasons could account for students' poor performance in English essay writing. The most significant of these reasons perhaps, is the quality of writing instruction provided for students. Graham and Harris (2002) argue that the quality of instruction students receive is a major determinant of their writing achievement. In the Nigerian context, empirical research on the teaching of writing has focused predominantly on quasi-experimental studies seeking improvement in the teaching of writing using different methods and strategies (e.g. Akinwamide, 2012; Babalola, 2011; Igbor, 2016; Tijani & Ogbaje, 2013). The work of Okonkwo (2015) seems to be the only available research on teachers' attitude to the teaching of essay writing. The focus of research has been on students (E.g. Adeosun, 2004; Fakeye, 2016; Kolawole, 1998; Lekan, 2014; Oyinloye & Gbenedio, 2010). In order to improve teachers' pedagogic competence in the writing classroom, information has to be obtained about teachers' affective factors that could influence the teaching of writing. This study seeks to fill that gap. This study therefore sought to examine senior secondary school English Language teachers' attitude towards the teaching of essay writing and their writing self-efficacy in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The paper's main research objectives are:

- To determine English Language teachers' dominant attitude towards the teaching of essay writing.
- To identify the level of English Language teachers' writing self-efficacy.
- To determine whether there are significant differences in English Language teachers' attitude

towards the teaching of writing and their writing self-efficacy based on gender and qualification.

## 1. Review of Related Literature

### Teachers' Attitude toward the Teaching of Essay Writing

An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" (Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p. 150). Thus, an individual's attitude towards an object is reflected in his/her disposition towards it. In the field of education, it is generally held that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are important for understanding and improving the education process. Arbeau and Coplan (2007) point out that teachers' beliefs and attitudes directly and indirectly impact upon children's' developmental outcomes. Similarly, as it relates to the teaching and learning of writing, Cho, Kim and Choi (2003) argue that teachers' attitude to writing is a critical element that determines the quality of writing instruction.

In other words, teachers' attitude toward writing instruction has an impact on the writing environment. Wilkins (2010) found that teachers' attitude towards the subject they teach influences how much time they spent preparing for and teaching the subject. Thus, it seems logical that teachers with a negative attitude towards the teaching of writing would not spend much time preparing for class or teaching it. The reverse would be the case if teachers' attitude towards writing were positive. In the Nigerian context, it is very important to study English Language teachers' attitude towards the teaching of essay writing as they (the teachers) play a pivotal role in providing students with opportunities for writing development. The English Language teacher is the prime instigator of most of the essays that students write. In addition, such students' essays are scored and commented on by the teacher.

In recognition of the importance of attitudes to what teachers do in the writing classroom, several studies have been carried out on teachers' attitudes in relation to different activities and aspects connected with writing (Adeyemi, 2012; Ferede, Melese & Tefera, 2012; Lee, 2003; Mackenzie & Kay, 2011). Few studies seem to have focused specifically on teachers' attitude towards the teaching of writing. For example, Wilkins (2010) in the United States, surveyed teachers' attitude towards the teaching of writing and found that the teaching of writing was not a favourite subject of the teachers. Similarly, Cremin and Oliver (2017) carried out a review of empirical work from 1990-2015 on teachers attitude to writing and their perception of themselves as writers. The studies reviewed were from the USA, the UK, New Zealand, Canada and Australia. It revealed among others,



that teachers of literacy, irrespective of years of teaching experience, differed in their attitudes to writing. However, their attitudes toward writing tended towards negativity.

In Nigeria, Okonkwo (2015) examined secondary school teachers' attitude towards the teaching of essay writing. The study revealed that teachers had a negative attitude towards the teaching of essay writing.

A contrary finding of teachers' perception of themselves as writers and their attitude towards the teaching of writing is presented in the work of Brindle (2013) which was done in the United States. As a group, teachers in the study reported having moderately positive attitude towards their writing ability and the teaching of writing. Similarly, in Ferede, Melese and Tefera's (2012) study in Ethiopia, the teachers surveyed indicated positive attitude towards the teaching of writing. However, in practice, it was found that these teachers emphasized the teaching of other aspects of English to the detriment of the teaching of writing. Thus, from the review of empirical work on teachers' attitudes in relation to writing, it is revealed that although a relatively large body of work exists on teachers' perception of themselves as writers and their attitude to writing generally, few studies seem to have concentrated on teachers' attitude to the teaching of writing specifically. The L2 context reveals even more paucity of empirical research on writing teachers' attitudes. Hence, there is a need to examine teachers' attitudes toward the teaching of essay writing in the Nigerian L2 context.

### **Factors Affecting Teachers' Attitude towards the Teaching of Essay Writing**

Teachers' attitudes toward the teaching of writing is shaped by a number of factors including gender, past writing school experiences, and initial teacher training and professional development. As it relates to gender and teachers' attitudes toward the teaching of writing, few studies have specifically examined the relationship. However, the literature on students' gender and their attitude towards writing might provide a clue. This is because attitudes once formed, might take a long time to change. There are contrary findings on the relationship between students' writing attitude and their gender. For example, Hansen's (2001) result indicate a gender difference in writing attitudes with boys reporting a higher level of negative writing satisfaction and less enjoyment than girls. A similarly finding is reported by Scott (2012) whose results indicate that male students perceive writing to be a negative thing. However, Lekan, et al. (2014) and Nitinkumar and Bharat (2018) found no significant gender difference in students' attitude towards writing. Okonkwo (2015) found no significant gender

difference in teachers' attitudes toward the teaching of essay writing.

Moreover, teachers' attitude toward the teaching of writing is shaped by their past school writing experiences (Hall, 2016; Mackenzie, Hemmings & Kay, 2011; Street, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Research suggests that negative childhood and school experiences of writing exerts a long-term influence on teachers' attitude to writing and on their writing practices (Drape, Barksdale-Ladd & Radencich, 2000). For example, in Draper et al.'s study, teachers who expressed negative attitudes toward writing and who did not regard themselves as writers were those who associated their early experiences of learning to write with 'copying' and 'rote' approaches. On the contrary, confident writers saw writing as a creative process. Similarly, in Cremin and Baker's (2010) study, an experienced teacher surveyed recalled no positive memory of primary and secondary school writing which created a negative impression toward writing on the teacher. The teacher only began to enjoy writing as an undergraduate which resulted in improved attitude to writing.

Furthermore, initial teacher training and professional teacher development programmes have been found to influence teachers' attitudes toward writing and the teaching of writing (Brindle, 2013; Cremin & Oliver, 2017). For instance, Brindle (2013) found a statistically significant relationship between teacher preparation to teach writing and their attitudes toward writing and the teaching of writing. Similarly, Whitney (2008) found that a majority of the teachers in her study who participated in a writing development programme were able to gain a better insight into the writing process and of themselves as writers and teachers of writing. This improved their attitudes toward writing. Bifuh-Ambe (2013) argues that professional development can improve teachers' attitude towards the teaching of writing. Cremin and Oliver (2017) summarize the discourse on the influence of initial teacher-training and professional development programmes on teachers' attitude to writing by suggesting that they may have significant potential for promoting positive teacher attitudes toward writing.

### **Teachers' Writing Self-Efficacy**

Another teacher-related factor that can influence the quality of writing instruction that students receive is teacher self-efficacy. The construct of teacher self-efficacy grew out of Bandura's (1977) research on self-efficacy. Bandura's research highlighted the role of cognitive processes in influencing a person's behaviour. According to him, self-efficacy is 'beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of actions required to produce



given attainments' (p. 3). These beliefs determine whether or not a certain behaviour or performance will be attempted, the amount of effort the individual will contribute to the behaviour, and how long the behaviour will be sustained when obstacles are encountered (Brown, 1999). Bandura identified the sources influencing and regulating the cognitive processes behind an individual's self-efficacy. They are: (1) performance accomplishment (enactive); (2) vicarious experience (vicarious); (3) verbal persuasion (exhortative) and; (4) emotional arousal (emotive).

Performance accomplishments are based on a person's past experiences and accomplishments. If there is an established pattern of success, the negative impact for failure is reduced and vice versa. Bandura identifies performance accomplishments as the most important source of a person's self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences or observation of others performing similar behaviour is another source of self-efficacy beliefs. Through observations, individuals are able to have the expectation 'that they too can improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts' (Bandura, 1977, p. 197). Verbal persuasion is the third source that can influence a person's self-efficacy beliefs. Verbal persuasion comprises, suggestion, social persuasion and self-instruction (Frazer, 2014). Lastly, Bandura identified emotional arousal as a source of self-efficacy. The emotive elements (arousal, anxiety, feelings of excitement, etc.) enable individuals to judge an event or experience as positive or negative.

The construct of self-efficacy has been applied in different areas. When it is applied to teachers, it is known as teacher efficacy (Frazer, 2014). Teacher efficacy, also referred to as teacher self-efficacy or teachers' sense of efficacy has been the focus of a sizeable number of research over the years. According to Graham, Harris and Fink (2001), teacher self-efficacy is a teacher's personal beliefs that s/he has the capability to be effective. Similarly, Wassen, Tze, Betts and Gordon (2011) conceive of teacher self-efficacy as teachers' confidence 'about their individual and collective capability to influence student learning' (p. 21). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) define teacher efficacy as the way teachers perceive their ability to organize and perform required actions necessary to successfully fulfil their task in specific context. This definition highlights the fact that measures of teacher self-efficacy should be context-specific. This idea is supported by Bandura (2006) who asserts that 'scales of self-efficacy must be tailored to the particular domain of functioning that is the object of interest' (p.308).

Therefore, there is a difference between general self-efficacy and specific self-efficacy (Chen, 2019). This reason necessitates the need for self-efficacy beliefs to

be specified (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2012). It has been argued that teachers with a high level of general self-efficacy may not necessarily have high self-efficacy in specific aspects such as their perception of their writing ability. Thus, this study focuses on English Language teachers' writing self-efficacy. As used in this study, teacher writing self-efficacy refers to teachers' perception of their writing ability. According to Al-Mekhlafi (2011), writing self-efficacy discussions are usually centered on three degrees of efficacies – high, medium and low.

Furthermore, research in teacher self-efficacy studies have proliferated because the construct has been identified as a major factor determining actual classroom instruction (Kahraman, 2012). According to Frazer (2014), a teacher's sense of self-efficacy is a predicative factor of teachers' success as it affects motivation and teaching style. Thus, the construct has implications on student achievement. A number of studies have described the effect of teacher self-efficacy on instruction and student performance. Teacher self-efficacy is linked to increased teacher motivation (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). It is similarly correlated with teachers' willingness to be innovative, more organized and less critical of students' errors (Graham et al., 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy produce better results than teachers with low self-efficacy (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

As it relates to the teaching of writing specifically, it has been suggested that L2 writing teachers' perception of themselves as writers may play a crucial role in their decision making concerning actual classroom instruction (Casanave, 2004). Similarly, Brooks (2007) posits that teachers' perception of their own writing impacts their teaching of writing. Teachers must feel competent as writers in order to provide the kind of instruction and modelling that will help students develop into proficient writers (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). According to Daisy (2009), teachers' beliefs in their ability to teach writing are shaped, in part, by their perception of themselves as writers. Teachers who are anxious about their own writing abilities find it difficult to teach writing, and lacking confidence makes it more likely that they would give up trying to help students who are struggling as writers (Street & Stang, 2009). Teachers' personal beliefs about their own writing shortcomings can lead to reluctance about teaching writing (Tracy, Scales & Luke, 2014).

Some researchers have investigated pre-service teachers' writing self-efficacy in relation to measures such as writing performance (Al-Mekhlafi, 2011; Lavelle, 2006; Wachholz & Etheridge, 1996), while others have focused on teachers already on the job



(Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Frank, 2003; Tracy et al., 2014; Yigitoglu, 2011). However, in the English as a Second Language field, investigations of self-efficacy have predominantly focused on learners. Kola and Sunday (2015) observe that teacher self-efficacy is one of the constructs that is yet to be taken seriously in the education context in Nigeria. In addition, as highlighted in Wyatt's (2018) review of 115 studies on Language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs for the years 2005-2016, investigations in ESL and EFL contexts are almost entirely outside Africa. Thus, there is a need for studies focusing on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in the African context, specifically in Nigeria. This study sought to fill that gap.

### Factors Influencing Teachers' Writing Efficacy

Several factors have been identified as being able to influence a teacher's efficacy generally and writing self-efficacy specifically. They include teaching experience, gender, highest qualification attained, teacher preparation, participation in professional development, race, and specific context among others (Frazer, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). This study however examined if teacher writing self-efficacy differ by gender and qualification.

Hansen (2009) indicates that gender differences are particularly common as it relates to writing self-efficacy. Studies of children in elementary and middle school show that girls reported higher writing self-efficacy than boys (Pajares, 2002). However, several studies indicate that gender differences in writing decline with age; as females get older, their sense of self-efficacy drops (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Pajares, Valiante & Cheong, 2007). For example, Greene (1999) found no difference in the writing self-efficacy of first year college students based on gender. Similarly, Williams and Takaku (2011) reported no significant effect of gender with regard to writing self-efficacy. The authors conclude that their study's result confirms previous studies showing that gender differences with regards to writing self-efficacy declines overtime. Other studies too have found no significant difference between gender and teacher self-efficacy for writing (Chacon, 2005; Lee, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

However, a contrary finding is presented in Gundogmus (2018). The study examined teacher-trainees self-efficacy for teaching first reading and writing. The study revealed a statistically significant gender difference in teacher-trainees' self-efficacy with the females having higher self-efficacy than their male counterparts. The discrepancy in research findings on gender and teacher self-efficacy beliefs necessitates the need for further research in this area.

Moreover, teacher qualification is a factor that can influence teacher self-efficacy. For example, Frazer's (2014) study revealed that the total number of additional qualifications held by teachers was a significant predictor of personal efficacy. Teacher qualification was positively correlated with personal efficacy. Similarly, Ghasemboland (2014) found a positive relationship between the highest degree earned and teacher self-efficacy beliefs. Lee's (2009) findings also indicated a low but positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy beliefs and highest degree earned. This study sought to add to the literature on teacher efficacy by determining whether teachers differ in their writing self-efficacy based on qualification.

### Methodology

#### Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design focused on examining teachers' attitude towards the teaching of essay writing and their writing self-efficacy. To address the research questions and hypotheses, relevant data were gathered using a well-designed questionnaire which was administered to English Language teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in Benin City.

#### Population and Sample for the Study

The population for the study comprises English Language teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in Benin City. The participants in the study were sixty (60) teachers of English Language comprising twenty-one (21) male and thirty-nine (39) female teachers. The simple random sampling technique and purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) were employed to select participants for the study. From the five local government areas (LGAs) in Benin City, three were randomly selected (Ikpoba-Okha, Oredo and Egor) using the ballot procedure. From each LGA selected, seven (7) schools and their English Language teachers were purposefully selected. Twenty teachers were selected from each LGA. A maximum of three and a minimum of two teachers were selected from each sampled school. The criteria for the selection of schools is based on the following:

1. They must be public schools.
2. They must have at least three qualified English Language teachers with a minimum qualification of an N.C.E degree in English Language.
3. They must be willing to participate in the study.

#### Research Instrument

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was preferred for a



number of reasons. First, it would be able to yield the needed data for the study. As noted by Mackey and Gass (2005), questionnaires are flexible in different researches because they are able to provide both quantifiable data and qualitative insights. Secondly, the method is cost-effective and saves time. Thirdly, it gives the respondents sufficient time to respond to the items on the instrument.

The questionnaire is titled "Questionnaire on Teachers' Attitude toward the Teaching of Writing and Writing Self-Efficacy (QTASE)". The instrument has three (3) sections. Section A covers the respondents' demographic data. Sections B and C are modified Likert-type scales with four options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Section B consists of eleven (11) items designed to measure teachers' attitude to the teaching of writing. Section C is made up of eight (8) items designed to capture teachers' writing self-efficacy. The questionnaire is scored thus for positively worded items:

Strongly Agree = 4

Agree = 3

Disagree = 2

Strongly Disagree = 1

The reverse is the case for negatively worded items.

The instrument for the study was prepared by the researcher. Two lecturers in the field of Language Education from the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, read through the instrument for content and face validity. Their useful criticisms and suggestions were effected in the final version of the instrument. The instrument was further pretested using five senior secondary school English Language teachers prior to distributing the questionnaire to a wider number of teachers. This was done in order to ensure that the items were well articulated and that the respondents interpreted each item in the same way.

Furthermore, in order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to thirty teachers of similar status as those used in the study but who did not form part of the study sample. Data collected was analysed using Cronbach alpha and it yielded a reliability co-efficient of .73.

#### Data Collection

Sixty copies of the questionnaire were produced and personally distributed to teachers in the sampled schools. Before distributing the questionnaires, permission was first sought from the heads (principals) of the various secondary schools. In addition, a cover letter was included in the questionnaire. It explains the purpose of the research and the type of questions asked. It also indicates that participation in the research is voluntary. It further assures the participants of the confidentiality of the information they provide. The participants were

asked to complete the questionnaires while the researcher waited to answer any questions asked and to collect the filled questionnaires. Retrieval of the questionnaires were on the spot which ensured a hundred percent return rate.

#### 4. RESULTS

The research findings are presented in five sub-sections. Analysis of Section A showed that the sampled teachers comprises thirty-nine (39) females and twenty-one (21) males. One (1) had the National Certificate Examinations certification (N.C.E) only. Sixteen of them had a Bachelors of Arts (B.A.) Degree in English Language, nine (9) had Masters (M.Ed.) Degree in English Language Education while thirty-four had Bachelor of Arts (B.A. Ed.) Degree in English Language.

#### Teachers' Attitude toward the Teaching of English Essay Writing

To answer the research question "What is the dominant teacher attitude towards the teaching of English essay writing?" teachers were asked to indicate their degree of agreement to statements which sought to gauge their attitude towards the teaching of English essay writing. The result is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Teachers' Dominant Attitude towards the Teaching of English Essay Writing**

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Cut-off	Decision
Attitude	60	23.00	3.48	27.50	Negative

Table 1 shows that the cut-off mean is 27.50. The mean attitude of the teachers is less than the cut-off mean ( $\bar{X}$  = 23.00). This result indicates that teachers generally have a negative attitude towards the teaching of essay writing.

#### Teachers' Perception of their Writing Ability

In order to answer the research question, "Do teachers consider themselves to be good writers?" teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement to statements which sought to ascertain their perception of themselves as writers. The analysis of the data is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Teachers' Writing Self-Efficacy**

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Cut-Off	Decision
Self-Efficacy	60	17.49	2.13	20.00	Low



Results from Table 2 reveals that the mean cut-off is 20.00. However, the teachers' self-efficacy value ( $\bar{X}=17.49$ ) falls below the cut-off mean. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers have low writing self-efficacy.

**Teachers' Gender, Attitude toward the Teaching of Essay Writing and Writing Self-Efficacy**

This study also examined if there were gender differences in teachers' attitude towards the teaching of essay writing and in their writing self-efficacy. Two hypotheses were formulated for this purpose.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in teachers' attitude toward the teaching of English essay writing based on gender.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in teachers' writing self-efficacy based on gender.

In order to answer both hypotheses, independent-samples t-tests were conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 Independent-Samples t-test for Differences in Teachers' Attitude toward the teaching of English Essay Writing and their Writing Self-Efficacy Based on Gender**

Variable	Sex	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	Sig.
Attitude	Male	21	30.10	4.44	56	2.14	.04*
	Female	39	27.76	3.67			
Self-Efficacy	Male	21	21.57	1.94	57	3.57	.00*
	Female	39	19.71	1.90			

\*Significant at  $p \leq .05$

Data on Table 3 reveals that the value for gender (attitude) is significant at .04. This is significant when tested at 0.05 level of significance. It therefore indicates that there is a significant gender difference in teachers' attitude towards the teaching of English essay writing. Similarly, the value for gender (writing self-efficacy) is significant at .00. This is significant when tested at 0.05 level of significance. It therefore implies that there is a significant gender difference in teachers' writing self-efficacy.

**Teachers' Qualification and Attitude towards Teaching Essay Writing**

Another issue investigated in the study is the difference in teachers' attitude to the teaching of essay

writing based on qualification. For this purpose, a hypothesis was formulated.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference in teachers' attitude toward the teaching of essay writing based on qualification.

In order to test the hypothesis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted using an overall score for teachers' attitude towards the teaching of essay writing which was calculated by summing the individual score for each item measuring teacher attitude. The descriptive statistics of the difference in teachers' attitude toward the teaching of essay writing based on qualification is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Difference in Teachers' Attitude toward the Teaching of Essay Writing Based on Qualification**

Qualification	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
N.C.E	1	25.00	
B.A	16	28.19	3.12
B.A (Ed.)	34	29.79	4.11
M.Ed.	9	24.75	3.37
Total	60	28.57	4.07

Table 4 reveals that the mean for teachers with B.A. (Ed.) is the highest (29.79). It is followed by the mean of those with B.A. (28.19), N.C.E. (25.00) and M.Ed. (24.75) respectively. Table 5 presents the ANOVA results indicating whether the differences in the means is significant.

**Table 5. ANOVA Summary of the Difference in Teachers' Attitude toward Teaching English Essay Writing Based on Qualification**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	180.7	4	60.26	4.25	.01*
Within Groups	765.453	56	14.18		
Total	946.22	60			

\*Significant at  $p \leq .05$

Table 5 reveals that teachers' attitude toward the teaching of English essay writing has a significant value of .01. Since this value is lesser than the significant level



of .05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that teachers differ in their attitude to the teaching of English essay writing based on their qualification.

### Teacher Qualification and Writing Self-Efficacy

The study further sought to determine if there is a difference in teachers' writing self-efficacy based on qualification. For this purpose, a hypothesis was formulated.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference in teachers' writing self-efficacy based on qualification.

In order to test the hypothesis, ANOVA was conducted using an overall score for teachers' writing self-efficacy which was calculated by summing the individual score for each item measuring teacher writing efficacy. The descriptive statistics of the difference in teachers' writing self-efficacy based on qualification is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of the Difference in Teachers' Writing Self-Efficacy Based on Qualification**

Qualification	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
N.C.E	1	17.00	
B.A	16	20.38	1.54
B.A (Ed.)	34	20.64	2.25
M.Ed.	9	19.78	2.28
Total	60	20.37	2.10

Table 6 shows that the mean for teachers with B.A. (20.38) is the highest. This is followed by those with B.A. (Ed.) (20.64), M.Ed. (19.78) and N.C.E. (17.00) respectively. To determine if the differences in means were significant, ANOVA was conducted. Table 7 presents the ANOVA results.

**Table 7. ANOVA Summary of Difference in Teachers' Writing Self-Efficacy Based on Qualification**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16.86	4	5.62	1.29	.29*
Within Groups	238.94	56	4.34		
Total	255.79	60			

\*Significant at  $p \leq .05$

Table 5 reveals that teachers' writing self-efficacy has a significant value of .29. Since this value is greater than the significant level of .05, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that teachers do not differ in their writing self-efficacy based on their qualification.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Results to research question one revealed that English Language teachers generally have a negative attitude towards the teaching of essay writing. Their responses in the questionnaire showed that they prefer teaching other aspects of English Language such as grammar, reading and vocabulary to teaching essay writing. This result is in consonance with Okonkwo's (2015) findings and Adeyemi's (2012) observation that essay writing is dreaded by teachers. The result though is in contrast with that of Ferede et al. (2012) which showed that teachers have positive attitudes towards the teaching of writing. The teachers in the study did not perceive the teaching of writing to be more challenging than the teaching of grammar, reading, listening or vocabulary. However, the teachers did not put their beliefs into practice as they emphasized other aspects of English Language instruction to the detriment of writing instruction.

Several factors could account for this result. Okonkwo (2015) identifies some factors responsible for teachers' negative attitude and reluctance towards the teaching of essay writing in secondary schools in Nigeria. Although the teachers in her study agreed that essay writing is important for the intellectual development of students, they identified the complex nature of writing, the high student/teacher ratio, the time-consuming nature of essay instruction and essay grading, their overloaded work schedule and poor financial incentives in terms of teacher salary as factors responsible for their negative attitude towards essay writing instruction.

Moreover, teachers' attitude toward the teaching of essay writing could rub off on their students. Research shows that when teachers have positive attitudes toward the teaching of writing and show enthusiasm for writing, their students grow as writers (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). The reverse is the case when teachers hold negative attitudes toward the teaching of writing. Similarly, teachers' attitude towards the teaching of essay writing influences the amount of time they spend preparing for and teaching it (Wilkins, 2010). As the result of this study indicates negative teacher attitude towards the teaching of essay writing, the situation could account for students' poor performance in essay writing examinations as they might have been poorly prepared for writing by teachers who feel ill-prepared to teach writing and hold a negative attitude towards its teaching.





Further findings in relation to research question two indicated that teachers have a low writing self-efficacy. This result could account for teachers' negative attitude towards the teaching of essay writing. As noted by Tracy et al. (2014), self-efficacy has an effect on motivation, achievement and attitude. Teachers who do not feel confident of their own writing ability will be reluctant to teach writing. This could perhaps explain why writing is less frequently taught compared to the other aspects of the English language (Adeyemi, 2012; Ferede, et al., 2012). In the same vein, teachers who have low writing self-efficacy cannot be expected to produce students who are confident of themselves as writers. Lavelle's (2006) findings showed that low writing self-efficacy was related to poor writing quality.

Moreover, findings pertaining to hypothesis one and two revealed that teachers differ in their attitude towards the teaching of essay writing and their writing self-efficacy based on gender. Male teachers had more negative attitude towards the teaching of essay writing ( $\bar{X}$ = 30.10) than female teachers ( $\bar{X}$ = 27.76). This result corroborates the findings of studies which showed males to have more negative attitude towards writing than females (Hansen, 2001; Scott; 2012). The result however is in contradiction to studies which found no significant gender difference in students' and teachers' attitudes toward writing and the teaching of writing (Lekan et al., Nitikumar & Bharat, 2018; Okonkwo, 2015).

Similarly, male teachers in this study were found to have lower writing self-efficacy ( $\bar{X}$ = 21.57) than their female counterparts ( $\bar{X}$ = 19.71). The result corroborates the findings of Gundogmus (2018) and Pajares (2002) but disagrees with studies which found no significant difference in the writing self-efficacy of males and females (Chacon, 2005; Green, 1999; Lee, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Williams & Takaku, 2011). One way to explain more negative attitude of male teachers towards the teaching of essay writing and their lower writing self-efficacy compared to the female teachers is found in the observation made in Pajares and Valiante's (2006) study. They note that through the middle grades, boys perceive girls to be better writers. This is because boys view writing as a predominantly female activity. Students' belief in female superiority in writing could carry over well into their adult years as teachers of writing. Thus, the idea that gender differences relating to writing self-efficacy declines overtime as suggested by Williams and Takaku (2011), did not hold true for this study.

Analysis of data for hypothesis three revealed that teachers' attitude towards the teaching of writing differ based on their qualification. Data on Table 5 shows that teachers with a B.A. (Ed.) degree had more negative attitude ( $\bar{X}$ =29.78) towards the teaching of essay

writing followed by those with a B.A. degree ( $\bar{X}$ = 28.19), the one with an N.C.E certification ( $\bar{X}$ = 25.00) and lastly by those with a M.Ed. degree ( $\bar{X}$ = 24.75). Thus, those with the highest qualification had better attitudes towards the teaching of essay writing although it is still negative.

However, it seems contradictory that the category of N.C.E had better attitude towards the teaching of essay writing compared to those with a B.A/B.A (Ed.) degree. In addition, the category of teachers who would have been exposed to writing methodology courses during their years of teacher training (i.e. those with B.A Ed.) are actually those with the most negative attitude towards the teaching of essay writing. This result could be accounted for perhaps by teachers' past writing experiences. It could be that the N.C.E and B. A. degree holders have had better writing experiences in either or all of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education than those with a B.A. (Ed.) degree. This would be in line with Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) and Hall, Toland and Guo's (2016) observations that the way teachers approach writing instruction in the classroom depends among other things, on their personal experiences with writing, the way they were taught writing by teachers and the extent to which they enjoy teaching writing.

Finally, results for hypothesis four revealed no significant difference in teachers' writing self-efficacy based on qualification. Teachers with a B.A. (Ed.) degree had the lowest writing self-efficacy ( $\bar{X}$ = 20.64), followed by those with a B.A degree ( $\bar{X}$ = 20.38), those with a M.Ed. degree ( $\bar{X}$ = 19.78), and the one with an N.C.E. certification ( $\bar{X}$ = 17.00). However, the differences in means were not significant. This result is contrary to studies which found qualification to be a predictor of teacher self-efficacy (E.g. Frazer, 2014; Ghasemboland, 2014; Lee, 2009).

The result for hypothesis four could be accounted for perhaps by the fact that the teaching of essay writing is not given adequate attention in teacher preparation programmes or in professional development programmes for in-service teachers (Brindle, Graham, Harris & Herbert, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2000). In line with this view, Wood and Lieberman (2000) assert that teacher training in writing is shallow, infrequent and does not meet the teachers' needs. Similarly, Grisham and Wolsey (2011) show that pre-service teachers had little formal instruction on how to teach writing. These findings from various studies mirror the case of teacher preparation programmes in Nigeria. A majority of teachers in the present study reported feeling inadequately prepared to teach writing by the teacher education programme(s) they had received.



Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that no matter the level of educational qualification a teacher has, and no matter whether the degree was in the field of education or not, it has no effect on the teacher's writing self-efficacy. In addition, the fact that teachers in this study did not consider themselves as writers irrespective of the qualification they hold underscores an important fact. Writing is a complex skill which is time consuming. With the different demands on teachers of English Language, they would have little or no time to develop themselves as writers.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored teachers' attitude and self-efficacy beliefs as it relates to the teaching of English essay writing. It has furnished results that can be used by teachers to reflect on their writing attitude and self-efficacy as it affects their teaching of essay writing. Similarly, teacher educators can use the study's findings in designing training programmes in writing instruction for English Language teachers and teacher-trainees such that their writing attitude and self-efficacy would be improved. An improvement in teachers' attitude toward the teaching of writing and writing self-efficacy could lead to improvement in the writing achievement of students in school-based and external examinations.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that measures such as employing more English Language teachers in the secondary schools to considerably reduce the number of students a teacher would have to attend to in the writing classroom be adopted to improve teachers' attitude toward the teaching of writing and their writing self-efficacy. Too many students in a class can dissuade a teacher from giving writing assignments because reading and grading the essays take up much of a teacher's time. In addition, with more English Language teachers in a school, the various aspects of the language can be taken care of by different teachers, thus easing the teachers' workload.

Furthermore, the teaching of writing should be given adequate attention in English Language Teacher Education programmes. Courses should be tailored toward helping trainee teachers develop and adopt the kind of attitudes that are vital to their success as teachers of writing (Street, 2003). With a better understanding of teacher-trainees' background including their writing attitudes and writing self-efficacy, teacher education programmes should aid teacher trainees in exploring and changing if necessary, the writing attitudes they bring with them to the programme. The focus of writing methodology courses should be on practice and collaboration, not on theories alone. It has been pointed out that teachers prefer interactive sessions that include

peer and expert conversations rather than lectures (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013). There should be ample opportunities for teacher trainees to engage personally in the writing process, reflect upon their learning and corroborate with peers (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Similarly, teacher educators must bear in mind that they carry a heavy responsibility in terms of training others. Instructor's beliefs exert a powerful influence on teacher trainees. Studies have shown that instructors in teacher preparation programmes who perceive themselves as writers and as individuals who can teach writing, generally have teacher trainees with more positive attitudes towards writing and its teaching (Hodges, 2013). In addition to attention being paid to initial teacher training, focus should also be on the professional development of in-service teachers as it has been shown to improve teachers' attitudes toward the teaching of writing and their writing self-efficacy (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Cremin & Oliver, 2017; Whitney, 2008).

Moreover, since the skill of writing is needed in all subject areas, writing across the content areas should be introduced in the secondary school. This would enable all teachers see the need to improve students' writing, irrespective of the subjects they teach. This move could also go a long way in improving teachers' attitude toward the teaching of writing as well as their writing self-efficacy as there would be corroboration among all teachers. Similarly, students' performance in essay writing examinations could improve as a result of more attention being paid to the writing skill in the school curriculum. It is hoped that if all the aforementioned recommendations are implemented in secondary schools in Nigeria, English Language teachers' reluctance to teach essay writing would be reduced, if not eliminated.

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