

Investigating the Academic Writing Skills of Tertiary Education Students: Challenges and Pedagogical Implications

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Academic writing remains a significant challenge for students in higher education, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts. This study investigates the academic writing skills of second-year students enrolled in the tertiary education at selected Advanced Technological Institute (ATI) with a focus on identifying key difficulties and their pedagogical implications. A mixed-method approach was employed, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to ensure methodological rigor. In this study, twenty-five second-year second semester students pursuing tertiary education were randomly chosen for investigation. A structured questionnaire (Google Form) was administered to gather students' self-reported perceptions, challenges and errors in academic writing. Moreover, the questionnaire focused on gathering students' opinions regarding the effectiveness of Lecturers' pedagogical instruction of the contents in academic and professional writing skills in the second-year second semester curriculum. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data, while quantitative responses were statistically analyzed. The findings reveal that 72% of students struggle with fundamental academic writing conventions, including coherence, grammatical accuracy, and formal vocabulary usage. Additionally, 75% of students reported difficulty in completing writing tasks, largely due to insufficient prior exposure to academic writing and inadequate instructional support. The study identifies pedagogical gaps in the curriculum, including a lack of structured academic writing instruction, insufficient scaffolding of writing tasks, and minimal formative feedback. These findings underscore the need for curriculum enhancements, including targeted academic writing interventions, explicit instruction on writing conventions, and increased opportunities for formative assessment. This study contributes to the broader discourse on academic writing pedagogy by providing empirical insights into the challenges faced by tertiary education students and proposing pedagogical interventions to enhance academic writing proficiency. Future research should explore intervention-based strategies and longitudinal improvements in students' writing skills.

Keywords: Academic writing, Curriculum development, Tertiary education, Writing pedagogy