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THE SAME OLD SEMINAR IN A NEW WRITTEN FORMAT

INTRODUCTION

Modern universities face significant challenges – among them the need to harmonize their three missions and goals: teaching, research, and providing services to the community. These goals seem well coordinated, but many empirical studies have found that they conflict with the task of preparing the next generation of professionals (Cheol & Teichler, 2013). Undergraduate programs emphasize preparing the next generation of researchers (courses in methodology, statistics and academic writing) instead of providing relevant professional knowledge and skills that would serve most of graduates, who plan to enter the job market. A vivid example is the independent research project that culminates the studies of BA and MA studies. Students write one or two seminar papers during their final year under the supervision of a senior lecturer. Such projects certainly strengthen research practices and academic writing skills, which are essential to demonstrate academic achievements (and to complete the degree), but are rarely practiced later on. These students, who will soon become professionals, will hardly ever carry out research on a given topic, write a scientific paper, or even read a peer-reviewed journal paper. Training professionals entails accommodating undergraduate programs to their professional lives: embedding more practical and less scientific aspects of writing into their curriculum. In such cases it is not exactly clear what is becoming embedded (Butin, 2006), and which pedagogical, political, and institutional resources are necessary to accomplish this goal.

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Studies in various professional domains (e.g. nursing, accounting) have found that university graduates lack sufficient professional knowledge and skills (Manykia et al., 2011). According to Cappelli (2015), although graduates acquire technical skills, they lack soft skills such as developing interpersonal relations, critical thinking and analysis, decision-making, team building, oral and written communication, and leadership. For example, employers in accounting firms have noted the lack of effective communication skills (Yu, Churyk & Chang, 2013). Similar complaints appear with regard to soft-skills which are critical for successful entry into contemporary accounting practice (Jackson and Chapman, 2012; Kavanagh and Drennan, 2008). In another study, both educators and leaders in the health information field emphasize the need for improved employability skills (e.g., communication skills and workplace etiquette), and an increase in apprenticeships and professional practice experience to compensate for this gap in formal training (Jackson, Lower & Rudman, 2016). Despite the broad agreement on the importance of these skills, the process by which students should develop them remains contentious (Jackson et al., 2016; Rosenberg et al., 2012).

The importance placed on scientific research also conflicts with another goal – quality teaching. A recent think-tank report sponsored by the Israeli Student Union criticizes the poor old-fashioned teaching style of many teachers (National Union of Israeli Students, 2016). University lecturers, many of whom are talented researchers, tend to place low priority on quality transmission of knowledge. Instead of adopting innovative experiential teaching methods, many prefer frontal lecturing and prefer power-point presentations to newly developed technologies. Lack of relevant, interesting and challenging courses deter the Y generation students who are disappointed by the quality of their studies. The Think-tank team, comprised of renowned academic experts, also recommends that higher education institutions should encourage and reward lecturers who develop unconventional active models of teaching and learning in their courses (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The current study follows this rationale and tries to bridge one small gap between the academy's scientific orientation and the graduates' need for updated soft skills. Student teachers were taught to communicate their thoughts simply and clearly in order to make them more relevant to their professional goals; to develop independent attitudes based on lifelong learning; to improve their ability to convey a message; to enhance their ability to convince others; and to encourage them to be more sensitive to the needs and interests of listeners and readers.

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING TWO GENRES OF WRITING

Academic writing is often considered unnecessarily complicated, long-winded and technical, an elitist and pompous expression that excludes outsiders (Hartley, 2008, 4). Genre theory addresses these communicative styles including the style of scholarly written papers and essays published in peer-reviewed journals. Only recently have these theorists begun to study the impact of the media and World Wide Web and the Internet on these publications (Strongman, 2013). Hardly any of these theorists study ‘softer’ popular versions of academic writing, such as articles published in professional periodicals like the *Phi Delta Kappan* and the *Times Educational Supplement*. These articles tend to be shorter than scientific papers; omit a detailed account of how data was collected; include a shorter (if any) theoretical background and provide a shorter list (if any) of bibliographical references. The sentences tend to be shorter; the language is simpler and includes less jargon and fewer abstract words. Many printed and online periodicals are read by millions of professionals who prefer them to the heavier academic style of peer-reviewed journal papers.

Are research papers more difficult to read and to write than articles published in professional journals? Flesch (1948) pioneering work on text readability was based on the premise that the length of words and the length of sentences in a passage can be computed to provide such a reading ease (RE) score. The underlying logic is clear – the longer the sentences and the longer the words within them, the more difficult the text. Hartley et al (2004) used the Flesch measure to compare the readability of research articles, textbooks for colleagues, and textbooks for students, specialist magazine articles and magazines articles for the public. Not surprisingly they found that the text gets easier to read as they moved across the genres. Is it actually more difficult to acquire the conventional academic writing style than to write a professional article? Luey (2002) argue that thesis (and seminar paper) has a limited purpose (fulfilling mandatory requirements) and a very small audience; it is often uncertain and defensive, justifying itself with excessive documentation; it is too narrowly focused; and it has not yet developed a style of its own (p. 34). The current study compares the teaching and learning of both genres of academic writing, the conventional scientific report and articles published in professional periodicals.

2. THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP: WRITING A PROFESSIONAL ARTICLE

Within the context of undergraduate studies in an Israeli teachers' college, the author conducted two similar year-long seminars. The two courses were comprised of preschool student teachers who studied parent-teacher relations. These students also attended a second seminar taught by another instructor. The initial plan was to devise a structured controlled experimental design and assign one course as an 'experimental' group in which the students would write their seminar paper as an article and the 'control' group which would write a conventional scientific report. However, for administrative reasons I was asked to use a less desirable option – invite students from both courses to volunteer for the experimental group. After four weeks of intensive marketing, ten students joined the 'article' group. Some tried to negotiate the terms for their participation (e.g. bonus in grades).

Selecting a professional journal. Within the limited number of educational journals published in Israel, only one is geared for preschool teachers. *Hed Hagan* (in Hebrew 'The Kindergarten Echo') is a quarterly which has been published by the Israeli Teachers' Union ever since 1935. The 120 page issues are colorful, beautifully designed with photos and artwork, no commercial ads are included. The authors include practicing preschool teachers, pedagogic counselors, supervisors, psychologists, scholars and lecturers in teachers' colleges. Each issue includes several sections: an editorial introduction; in depth articles; short reports of initiatives and fieldwork; and short articles on newly published children's books. As an author of many professional articles including 19 papers published in *Hed Hagan*, I felt comfortable guiding students to write in this genre.

The in-depth article section, the selected format, addresses various pedagogical, organizational and psychological issues. It presents recent studies, describes large projects or discusses a pressing issue that concerns educators. These scholarly reports are shorter, written in a relatively simple, down-to-earth and jargon free style. When authors report a scientific study, they rarely provide a theoretical background and only very briefly cover aspects of research design. The results section covers half to two-thirds of the article, provides few tables or graphs and tends to simplify the main findings. The short discussion, about one page long, addresses daily practical issues. For example, in her paper "*Someone to speak with*", Esther Firsteter (2015) summarized a paper published earlier in a peer-reviewed teachers' education journal. At first, she introduces briefly (half page) Israeli preschool teachers' professional responsibility and organizational isolation.

Then she analyzes interviews she held with eight teachers (four pages) about their workload, sense of responsibility, and their unmet needs. The rich descriptions and explanations are accompanied with a few very short quotations not visually marked within the text. In the discussion (two pages), she argues that since professional isolation is compensated for with a sense of autonomy it alleviates organizational pressures and decreases the sense of loneliness and burnout. The paper includes twelve references, of whom only three are English sources. No appendices were included.

Because the editors of the journal do not publish any statement of mission or guidelines for authors, we devoted one lesson to identifying the main characteristics of the in-depth articles. We compared several such articles with other peer-reviewed journal papers published in a leading Hebrew social science journal.

- Most articles tend to cover qualitative rather than quantitative studies.
- Articles are regularly four to six pages long, and hardly ever exceed ten pages.
- The internal structure of the chapters and sub-sections is flexible, adjusted to the article's content and hardly follow any formal pre-determined pattern.
- Introductions tend to be rather short (about one page), informative and related to local realities in kindergartens and the educational system.
- The articles rarely contain an elaborate literature review, and neither do they follow a detailed theoretical perspective.
- Articles use formal language, though somewhat shorter sentences and less jargon than scientific papers.
- Authors tend to include samples of 'soft' raw material (e.g. photos, quotes from interviews) rather than numerical data (e.g. graphs, tables)
- A limited use of references (from six to twelve items) (not necessarily the most updated or well established).

The structure of courses. Asking students to hold a scientific inquiry and report their findings for the first time during their academic studies is certainly a challenging experience. It was decided, therefore, to build the program in several stages. At first, the students were given a list of 50 topics to choose from (e.g. how parents and teachers respond to children's sexual curiosity). They were also offered assistance in developing the rationale for the research and in phrasing the research questions. Within the next two months, until the end of semester, the students planned their research method including developing the research tools (mostly these were interviews) and the nature of the sample (mostly preschool

teachers and parents). They also wrote an introduction to the article (experimental) or a literature review (control). At each stage, the students were given personal guidance and feedback on the materials they sent. After receiving approval for their research design, they collected data and also were taught about qualitative content analysis (the experimental group) and the dividing the report into sections (the controls). The final lessons were devoted to personal guidance. Students from both groups attended all of the lessons, while the experimental group attended two additional frontal lessons about article writing during the second semester.

Teaching how to write an article. Only two lessons were held separately for the experimental group. At the first, we identified the characteristics of *Hed Hagan's* in-depth articles. The tentative guidelines we found helped the students understand the basic premises of article writing. The second lesson was devoted to practicing writing according to the genre. To accomplish this, I used the 'master class' format – the instructor illustrates through example how to write in front of the students (Yariv, 2010). The text is created jointly and the students are encouraged to contribute their ideas and even to correct the lecturer's mistakes. Technically, the classroom is arranged in a semi-circle in front of a screen. The lecturer is seated last in the row so that he can simultaneously use the keyboard and lead the discussion with the participants. As the lecturer types the words, he explains his thoughts and considerations, consults with the students, and sometimes stops writing and elaborates on a certain topic. Such a form of a 'Master class' offers students an opportunity to respond, to raise questions and suggestions and to learn how the 'chef' actually 'cooks.' Unlike explaining boring 'dry' rules of style and grammar ('combine shorter sentences'), the live presentation is more challenging and involves unexpected and surprising turns. In addition to the frontal lessons both groups enjoyed collective and individual tutoring sessions in person and via email.

Several principles were employed during the lessons as well as individual guidance as how to write the article (Nygaard, 2009): First, defining the audience. Raising the question "who are you talking to?" initiated a discussion as to what characterizes a preschool teacher as a reader; which topics may interest her; what are the reading habits; what written style would best attract her, and the like. The request to imagine individual readers with whom they communicate surprised the students, but soon became an effective roadmap arranging the contents and style to the readers' interests. Second, students were

taught to form core arguments. The question “what would you want to say?” referred not only to the research questions, but also to the expected outcomes of the article and the students’ own attitudes towards the subject they studied. These questions challenged the students and stimulated much thinking. Third, developing structure and style. Here the question asked was “how are you going to say it?” Professional articles lack the rigid format of scientific papers. Therefore, developing the structure and the linguistic style of the chapter forced the students to invest much thought into continuously revising their work. The close supervision enabled the students to find their way within that writing maze.

Research questions. This action research (Ferrance, 2001) explores the process and outcomes of teaching and learning how to write a professional article. To accomplish this, we examined:

- A. What are the outcomes and benefits of such new format compared to writing a more traditional scientific report?
- B. What difficulties do students face?
- C. Should the new writing genre enrich or even replace the current practice?

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Participants. Both seminars included 46 students (female only), among them 42 respondents filled the questionnaires. Two thirds of the students speak Hebrew as a mother tongue; 22 percent speak Arabic and the rest speak Russian. Almost three quarters identified ethnically as Jewish, 20% as Druze, and very few as Christian or Muslim. The students’ proficiency levels in English and mathematics, as demonstrated by their high school matriculation exam were rather low (only one sixth took the highest level of English studies and none had taken the highest level in math). All the participants had taken a course in academic writing during their first or second year.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Several sources were used to collect data: First, students provided first drafts during their studies and received feedback. That material enabled them to track their developing skills. Second, a self-report based on a simple questionnaire was developed especially for the study and included four sections: A. personal and

demographic details. In order to compare individual responses before and after the course, students identified themselves by their names or ID number. They were also asked to provide details about measures of academic writing competence and achievement, such as attending a course in academic writing (and grades received in that course) and matriculation examination grades (Mathematics, English and Humanities). B. oral and written proficiency in Hebrew and English. This section includes eight statements on a Likert scale from one (“poor command”) to six (“highly proficient”). C. proficiency in academic writing skills with 16 statements (“phrasing a research question”; “writing a research method chapter”) on the same Likert type scale. D. an open question how the course contributed to the students’ academic writing skills.

Third, a qualitative open-ended follow-up questionnaire in which students in the experimental group described their learning process, difficulties they faced, and the contribution to their professional and academic development. Statistical analysis for the quantitative sections, as well as content analysis for the qualitative open-ended tools were used.

5. FINDINGS

Comparing the groups: quantitative findings

Both scales of oral and written proficiency and academic writing skills proficiency reached satisfactory reliability levels (Cronbach alpha .794 and .956 respectively). An independent-samples t-test reveal, as expected, no differences between the experimental and the control groups on the perceived oral and written skills before the program started ($M=4.41$, $SD=0.62$ vs. 4.23 , 0.56 respectively, $t(24)=-.842$ NS). Such was also the case with regard to the initial perceived proficiency in academic writing skills (3.67 , 0.89 vs 3.77 , 0.73 , $t(24)=.352$ NS). By the end of the courses, no differences were found regarding the perceived oral and written proficiency, but the control group reported better command of writing a scientific report (though statistically insignificant) than the experimental group (3.84 vs 4.07 , $t(24)=.530$ NS). The only statistically significant finding was the control group students’ sense of mastering writing the chapter on research methods (3.56 vs 4.12 , $t(24)=2.59$, $p=0.02$). Such was also the case, though statistically insignificant, with regard to both groups increased sense of improvement in academic writing skills. Surprisingly the sense of oral expression proficiency in both experimental and control groups decreased (4.46 vs 4.00 and 4.21 vs 4.01

respectively). These unexpected, though statistically insignificant findings, need careful examination in future research, hopefully with larger samples.

6. STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

When the students finished writing their articles, they were asked to summarize their impressions and experiences. Their short accounts describe vividly both the difficulties and the satisfaction. Words such as 'concern' (mentioned 9 times), 'I wanted' (7), 'hesitation' (5), 'I decided' (4) and the like, reflect their personal language and the intensive emotional involvement. The findings, which are based on content analysis, are presented chronologically: At first, the motives and reasons for joining the experimental group; the concerns and difficulties students faced; the process of guidance; the knowledge and skills gained, and finally the reflections and insights by the end of the project.

Motives for joining the experiment. The initial decision to ask students to volunteer instead of assigning them to the experimental group raised much concern and actually jeopardized the project. As it appeared, students were reluctant to join the experimental group. Only few courageous students did join on the spot, but many others experienced approach-avoidance conflict and approached the instructor with questions and requests. I had to 'market' the project for four additional weeks until we had a reasonable number of participants. On the positive side, they hoped it would enable them to explore a dilemma they had faced and hopefully advance themselves professionally. Several mentioned the instructor's intense 'marketing' efforts and promise to guide them as factors that increased their motivation.

I had many concerns. Even the word 'seminar' stressed and frightened me. Some friends told me how that work is complicated and difficult. At first, I had many doubts which topic to choose from the list. I wanted it to be unique and original, [Something] of interest for me. I decided to study children tendency to fall asleep during school's day. Initially I was determined to write a 'regular' seminar paper, but as the instructor mentioned the advantages of writing an article to *Hed Hagan*, I decided to switch groups.

The process of guidance. Teaching various genres calls for a different mode of supervision. Among the three *supervision models* (Dysthe, 2002), that of the control group, was mainly based on frontal "teaching. Since only two frontal lessons were actually allocated to the experimental group, we had" to move from

the product of writing to the processes involved, a shift in thinking away from the text itself to the students who generated it (Breeze, 2012). Instead of models of ‘teaching’ (not viable) or ‘partnership’ (irrelevant) I offered an ‘apprenticeship’ experience, both with formal and informal guided encounters, that offered sufficient opportunities for learning and practice. As it turned out, students in the experimental group did ask more questions and sent more drafts for feedback – almost twice as many as the control group (7.33 vs 4.12 respectively). Their accounts reflect how that assistance was essential.

The process of writing the article was very open and varied. I received throughout the course ample feedback sent by email for every section I wrote. It enabled me elaborate, finish one section, and then move to the next one. During the lessons the instructor presented the guidelines but was very empathetic to the [emotional] process we were going through. In each lesson [in both courses], he offered students opportunities to present their study, an excellent method to learn, not just reading power-point presentations. He patiently answered all of my questions and corrected all of the errors until I understood my mistakes.

The instructor’s accessibility via telephone, internet and in vis-à-vis meetings provided practical and emotional support (‘I was not left alone for a moment’); the personal regard, the guidance that showed us how to continue and reduce stress, led some of students to conclude that without that assistance they would have never completed the article. Such intensive guidance demands that the instructor devote much attention and effort to discussion, reading and commenting. Such a valuable resource would not have been possible with larger groups.

Difficulties and concerns. To write a seminar paper for the first time during their undergraduate studies appeared to be a formidable challenge. Some of the students’ concerns were rather specific (e.g. ‘my initial difficulty was to phrase the first sentence’) while others were more global, (e.g. ‘I was determined to learn and succeed in writing the article, not letting down the instructor and not disappointing myself’). Some of the obstacles refer to the lack of experience.

Once I decided to study that subject, I wondered: ‘will I be competent enough to complete the project?’ Many preschool teachers who face conflicts with parents prefer to hide their feelings. I was interested in knowing about their painful experiences, but I was not sure if they would agree to share them with me. At the first interview, I was very nervous. As the teacher opened up and shared her experience with me, I realized that despite many years [of teaching] she still needs a sympathetic ear. That is exactly what happened in the following interviews.

Learners bring their own expectations, personality and interpretive strategies. While some of their concerns are common to any student who writes a seminar paper, other concerns referred directly to the challenge of writing the professional article.

Writing an article was a big challenge. I worried I would not succeed in writing clearly enough, with fluent simple language. I was concerned that I might be unable to shrink all the data I collected [into a maximum of 10 pages]. It was difficult to choose my own words, expressing myself in an interesting manner. So many times I rewrote and changed the content to make it attractive and interesting for the readers.

Students mentioned difficulties in developing their own ideas and selecting the proper words to best express their intentions. Giving up the tendency to rely on published material and copy sentences and full paragraphs was certainly a significant obstacle. They also faced difficulties to edit the text, and were frustrated with the burden of writing and rewriting sentences and paragraphs.

Gained knowledge and skills. Students described various professional and personal gains, such as learning to write and speak more clearly ('many times, we say one thing but actually mean something else'); sorting out the essential [things] from the unimportant ones; thinking more deeply, being aware to others' point of view.

Via trial and error, I learned how to write to the point, to interest readers. I improved my style of writing in order to transmit essential information in an interesting manner. I also learned how to handle an interview in a pleasant and respectful manner in order to collect the information I needed for my research. I understand now to analyze the interviews. While writing the article I learned many things about myself, especially not to be afraid of unfamiliar new things. I learned not to give up my goals. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Reflections and insights. The concluding remarks depict a very positive sentiment and satisfaction of attending the experimental group, both in comparison to the initial expectations ('I did know this is going to be my best choice') and in comparison with the second seminar each student attended that year ('there is nothing to compare. Learning to write an article was much more significant for me'). Several students referred to their motivation during the course.

Writing in the format of an article forced me to delve more deeply into the subject. I invested all my efforts, skills and strengths to improve my writing skills to write in a more systematic and interesting way.

Writing [in a format of] an article is so different than writing any other seminar paper. There were also differences within the [experimental] group. I loved the freedom given to choose any topic and any style of writing. It brought about varied and different articles. Throughout the seminar, I also attend another seminar and there was no comparison. The instructor stayed in close touch with us; I never felt lost even when we had no idea where we are going. It was an amazing experience.

Several students expressed their gratitude to the instructor for the opportunity to join the group ("It was a high point in my undergraduate studies—the cherries on the cake"), while only one student, in a response to direct question, suggested clarifying the process and providing clear instructions.

7. DISCUSSION

The current action research is a preliminary effort to turn a research-oriented seminar into more professionally relevant learning. Based on the experimental group reflections, writing a short professional article was a very challenging but rewarding experience. Neither aspects, the challenge at the beginning and the satisfaction at the end, were consistent with my initial expectations and both deserve closer examination.

Based on Hartley et al. (2004) findings, one would expect that reading (and possibly writing) a research report is more difficult than reading professional magazine articles and magazines articles for the public. Although no such direct comparison was held in this study, the students' accounts portray writing an article as probably equal to or even more difficult than writing an academic report. One possible explanation is the lack of prior knowledge and experience. All of the students in both seminars had attended already several courses on research methodology and academic writing (including currently one or two seminars). Meanwhile, students in the experimental group were learning, for the first time, how to write the new genre. Having had no prior experience nor any clear writing guidelines – *Hed Hagan's* editors do not provide any guidelines for authors – the students were not sure what they had to do to reach a satisfactory level of expression. Their continuous requests for guidance in expressing their thoughts and editing their texts certainly reflect their feelings of uncertainty,

stress and frustration, at least at the beginning of the project. Only one student in the experimental group admitted that writing the conventional way in the second seminar was more difficult for her.

With such inherent obstacles, why were the students so enthusiastic at the end of the project? The process and outcomes of the teaching and learning provide several clues: First, selecting their own topic of research, developing the methodology, collecting the data and writing the article increased their sense of ownership and responsibility. Learning to write with the readers in mind motivated students to convey their message more simply and clearly, to develop their own ideas and justify their arguments. Such an empathetic stance probably improved the students' communication with their pupils' parents, as some students mentioned. It also helped them upgrade the quality of communication within their professional milieu.

All the participants felt the seminar was meaningful and relevant. Some mentioned that they acquired important practical tools for their future career. That perceived importance probably increased their motivation and interest. It also increased their resilience not to give up and to overcome at low points in the project, as many of them stated. Second, despite the difficulties they faced, the close supervision gave the students a sense of self-efficacy. Even when they experienced a mental block they never felt alone. Third, the process of guidance provided the necessary scaffolding. Adhering carefully to the optimal zone of proximal development (ZPD) minimized feelings of boredom when the task was too easy or feelings of despair when the task was too difficult (Vygotsky, 1980).

Seminars such as an academic independent study are essential elements that are the culmination of the undergraduate program. Students in both groups carried out their academic investigation, read peer reviewed journal papers, developed their research questions, decided upon the desired sample, and the like. Teaching both styles of academic writing supports Bean's (2011) argument that the most intensive and demanding tool for eliciting sustained critical thought is a well-designed writing assignment on a subject matter problem. That nexus between writing, disciplinary content and learning is essential (Ellis, Taylor, and Drury, 2005): "[...] research into student writing at university has shown that the experience of writing not only helps students to become familiar with the standards and style of written expression expected in their disciplines, but it also helps them to clarify their understanding of the subject matter about which they are writing". (p. 49-50)

Teaching a ‘popular’ writing genre, therefore, is a relatively small change within the broader picture. Is one writing genre better than the other is? As it appears, assigning different writing tasks does influence student thinking and writing. Greene (1993) asked undergraduate students to write either a report or a problem-based essay. The two groups differed significantly in their interpretation of the two tasks and in their approach to restructuring information from sources. However, there was no difference between the amount of prior knowledge that the students writing reports and problem-based essays included in their writing, nor were there differences in learning. The current findings support Greene’s results. There was no difference in gained academic writing skills, but the experimental group did express a higher level of involvement and motivation, ending the project more enthusiastic about the course.

In conclusion, this action research elaborated the students’ ‘soft’ skills of communication. These competencies are essential for those who wish to strengthen their professional skills instead of getting prepared to enter graduate studies and become researchers themselves. Encouraging the students to write a professional journal article obviously serves the purpose of encouraging them to read these journals (more critically) and continue to believe in themselves as writers once they are working in their profession. The study also contributed to my own professional development. The opportunity to assess my practices and improve teaching skills and methods, should be never-ending (Lumpkin, 2015). Despite some methodological errors and organizational problems that will be corrected in the future, the current project benefitted both the students and the instructor: The students gained new knowledge and skills and instructor enriched his own teaching practices and repertoire.

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DAWNE SEMINARIUM W NOWEJ FORMIE PISEMNEJ

Streszczenie

Badania przeprowadzone w różnych dziedzinach zawodowych wykazały, że absolwenci szkół wyższych nie posiadają wystarczającej tzw. miękkiej wiedzy i umiejętności zawodowych, zarówno ustnych, jak i pisemnych. Niniejsza działalność badawcza analizuje proces i wyniki uczenia przyszłych nauczycieli przedszkolnych nowego sposobu pisania tekstów. W ramach kontrolowanego projektu 46 absolwentów studiów licencjackich w izraelskim college'u uczestniczyło w dwóch podobnych rocznych seminariach prowadzonych przez autora. Dziesięciu z nich zgłosiło się na ochotnika do grupy eksperymentalnej, która przygotowała swój projekt badawczy w formie profesjonalnie napisanego artykułu. Formuła tekstu była nowoczesna, stosunkowo krótka, tekst napisano prostym językiem, bez żargonu, w przeciwieństwie do artykułów ukazujących się w recenzowanych czasopismach akademickich. Grupa kontrolna, złożona z pozostałych 36 osób, napisała pracę seminaryjną zgodnie z wymogami pisania tekstów akademickich. Porównując zauważone u studentów umiejętności pisania tekstów akademickich w ramach poszczególnych tematów oraz między grupami, przed i po programie nie wykazano istotnych różnic. Wolne wnioski studentów dotyczące jakości pracy wyraziście opisują problemy, z jakimi borykali się oni na początku kursu, oraz satysfakcję, jakiej wszyscy doświadczyli po jego ukończeniu. Te nieoczekiwane wyniki są omawiane, poddaje się krytycznej ocenie uzależnienie od jednego tradycyjnego sposobu pisania tekstów akademickich i podkreśla znaczenie nauczania innych, nowatorskich i bardziej odpowiednich metod pisania tekstów, które spełniają obecne wymogi dotyczące życia zawodowego.

Słowa kluczowe: pisanie tekstów akademickich; seminarium; wykształcenie wyższe; studia licencjackie.

THE SAME OLD SEMINAR IN A NEW WRITTEN FORMAT

S u m m a r y

Studies in various professional domains have found that university graduates lack sufficient 'soft' professional knowledge and skills such as oral and written competencies. This current action research explores the process and outcomes of teaching preschool student teachers a new writing genre. Within a controlled design, 46 senior undergraduate students in an Israeli teachers' college attended two similar annual seminars conducted by the author. Ten of them volunteered for the experimental group who wrote their research project in the format of a professional article. That format was a relatively short text written in simple jargon-free language, in contrast to the type of articles appearing in peer-reviewed academic journals. The control group (N=36) wrote a seminar paper according to the conventions of academic writing. Comparing students' perceived academic writing skills within subjects and between groups, before and after the program showed no significant differences. The students' open qualitative reflections vividly describe the problems they faced at the beginning of the course and the satisfaction they shared at the end. The discussion addresses these unexpected outcomes, criticizes the reliance on one conservative writing genre, and emphasizes the importance of teaching other up to date and more relevant genres that meet current professional demands.

Key words: academic writing; seminar; higher education; undergraduate studies.