

# **Unlocking Creativity: Approaches to Kickstart and Sustain Writing in the Post-Covid Era**

**Authors: Heather Thomas, Dr. Schontal Moore, Seleca Morrison, Kimberley Ormsby**

**Publication Date: 2024**

## **Abstract**

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the experiences and perspectives of two experienced English teachers who adapted their writing instruction methodologies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, the research delves into the challenges and innovative strategies these educators implemented in online teaching environments. The teachers adapted by incorporating methods like journaling for self-expression, collaborative writing, the dialogic method, and environmental journalism to enhance motivation and engagement. The study highlights the importance of setting specific goals and purposes for writing tasks to improve student outcomes. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and data confidentiality, were meticulously followed. The findings underscore the need for continued exploration of innovative instructional approaches and collaboration among educators, policymakers, and communities to address educational disparities and enhance writing instruction in the post-pandemic era.

**Key Words:** Qualitative Research Design, Innovative Teaching Strategies, Student Engagement Challenges

## **Background**

The Covid-19 pandemic catalysed transformative changes in Jamaica's education system, propelling educators and students into a realm of digital pedagogies to ensure continuity in learning (Blackman, 2021). As classrooms shifted online overnight, traditional teaching methods made way for virtual platforms and digital tools, ushering in an era of innovation and adaptation. However, this rapid transition also exposed deep-rooted inequalities, particularly concerning access to technology and internet connectivity (Trotta, 2023). Many students, especially those from marginalized communities, faced barriers to learning, highlighting the urgent need for equitable access to resources. Moreover, the shift to remote learning presented challenges in developing writing skills, with online platforms often prioritizing multiple-choice assessments over comprehensive writing tasks. This dearth of writing opportunities exacerbated existing issues in Jamaica's education system, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to writing instruction that embraces innovation and inclusivity. By leveraging Jamaica's cultural diversity, educators can foster a sense of pride and ownership in students' written expression, paving the way for more effective learning experiences.

Cummings (2023) highlights the challenges faced by higher education institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in transitioning writing instruction online. His study points out the disruption caused by the sudden shift away from face-to-face teaching, which fundamentally altered the traditional dynamics of composition classrooms focused on collaborative learning and community-building. The discussion of resilient teaching as a response to the uncertainties of the pandemic emphasizes the need for adaptive pedagogical strategies that prioritize student-centred approaches and foster community engagement

(Cummings, 2023 p.2). However, while the study effectively outlines the context and initial responses to the pandemic, it lacks a direct connection to the exploration of students' learning experiences within the digital writing landscape post-pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant shifts in the education system which affected academic writing instruction are premises upon which empirically-informed practices must be taken.

### **Rationale**

The rationale for conducting this qualitative study on "Unlocking creativity: Approaches to kickstart and sustain writing in the post-covid era" in Jamaica is multifaceted and compelling. Firstly, the Covid-19 pandemic has sparked a paradigm shift in education globally, necessitating a thorough examination of the challenges and opportunities presented in the wake of this unprecedented crisis. As Jamaica grapples with the ramifications of the pandemic on its education system, it becomes imperative to understand how educators are navigating the complexities of teaching writing in this new reality. Secondly, writing proficiency is universally recognized as a foundational skill essential for success in academia, the workforce, and beyond. However, the shift to remote learning during the pandemic has disrupted traditional writing instruction methodologies, leaving many students without adequate opportunities to develop and refine their writing skills. By delving into the experiences and strategies of educators in Jamaica, this study aims to shed light on innovative approaches to writing instruction that can bridge the gap created by the digital divide and empower students to become confident and proficient writers. Lewis-Fokum, Moore and Spencer (2021) highlight the importance of transformative pedagogy to significantly enhance learners' knowledge and skills, while also boosting teachers' confidence and effectiveness in remarkably positive ways.

Moreover, Jamaica's unique cultural and linguistic landscape presents a rich tapestry from which to draw inspiration for effective writing instruction. Through an exploration of the nuanced approaches employed by educators across the island, this study seeks to identify best practices that can inform writing instruction not only in Jamaica but also in other contexts grappling with similar challenges. Furthermore, the findings of this study have the potential to inform policy and practice in Jamaican education, guiding the development of strategies and interventions aimed at promoting writing proficiency among students. By amplifying the voices of educators and students alike, this research contributes to a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape, where every Jamaican student has the opportunity to unlock their creative potential through the written word.

### **Purpose**

This qualitative study investigates how Jamaican educators adapt teaching strategies for writing in post-Covid face-to-face classrooms. It explores innovative approaches addressing pandemic challenges and fostering a writing culture. Examining diverse strategies, the study aims to understand their effectiveness in engaging students and impacting writing development. In addition, the study explores methodologies that teachers can use to assess students' writing when these strategies are utilized. Insights gained can inform future practices in Jamaica's education system.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. How do Jamaican educators perceive the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on student writing development in the post-Covid era?
2. How have teachers adapted their teaching methodologies and practices to address these challenges?

3. How have Jamaican educators adapted their writing instruction assessment methods in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the transition from online learning modalities?

### **Significance of Study**

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into how to address students' writing problems. By delving into the challenges faced by Jamaican educators and the innovative strategies they have employed to navigate writing instruction in the post-Covid era, the study directly addresses critical educational concerns. Insights gained from understanding educators' adaptation after online learning ended and their adjustments in teaching methodologies offer valuable guidance for crafting best practices in writing instruction amid evolving educational paradigms. Moreover, this study contributes to broader discussions surrounding equity and inclusivity in education. By examining how educators are tackling disparities magnified by the pandemic; the study underscores the imperative of ensuring equitable access to writing instruction for all students. Addressing these educational inequities emphasize the need to find a way make up for the deficit in writing that students experienced while they used the online modality.

By investigating how educators leverage Jamaica's cultural assets to cultivate a writing culture, the study underscores the significance of culturally relevant pedagogy in bolstering student engagement and achievement. These insights extend beyond Jamaica, underscoring the importance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds into educational practices to enhance learning outcomes on a global scale. Additionally, the findings of this study can inform policy decisions pertaining to education in Jamaica and beyond. By pinpointing effective practices and areas necessitating improvement, policymakers can devise evidence-based strategies to support educators and elevate student outcomes. Thus, this study

serves as a valuable resource for educators seeking to confront the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and promote effective writing instruction in diverse educational settings.

Moreover, this study aims to fill critical gaps in understanding the specific adaptations Jamaican educators have made in writing instruction amidst the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly during the transition from online learning. By exploring educators' perceptions of the pandemic's impact on writing instruction and student development post-Covid, it addresses a gap in knowledge regarding the long-term effects of the pandemic on educational practices. Additionally, it seeks to shed light on the innovative approaches and strategies educators have implemented to cultivate a writing culture among students in the post-pandemic era, thus contributing to the discourse on effective pedagogical responses to crises in education. Overall, this research will provide valuable insights into the various ways educators have navigated the challenges of teaching writing during and after the pandemic, informing future educational practices and policy decisions.

## **Literature Review**

### **Overview**

Academic writing instruction holds significant power in shaping students' critical thinking skills, communication abilities, and academic success across disciplines. Moore and Lewis-Fokum (2016) emphasize the importance of strengthening students' critical thinking skills in light of the examinations that they are required to sit. They also highlight the teachers' role in retooling themselves with the appropriate pedagogy to assist students in being proficient. Through effective writing instruction, students not only learn to articulate complex ideas but also develop the capacity to engage with scholarly discourse and contribute meaningfully to their fields of study. Understanding the impact of academic writing instruction is crucial for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance educational outcomes and empower students to become proficient writers and critical thinkers. Milson-White (2015) argues that writing instructors must stay cognizant of the different discourse communities and use rhetorical tools to highlight these distinctions in their teaching. This approach helps students transfer existing strategies, adopt new ones as needed, and critically engage with conventions for their personal, disciplinary, and broader development. The pandemic negatively affected the effort of educators to assist students to become competent writers. Tarrayo et al (2022) reference Baralt et al.'s (2016) study that found that student engagement in online language learning may be less effective than classroom learning. They point out challenges such as plagiarism and late submission on the part of students while some teachers have challenges in giving feedback to students.

### **The Power of Free Writing**

To overcome the challenges experienced during the pandemic several strategies may be used. One such strategy is freewriting. Free writing serves as an effective strategy for

kickstarting writing, particularly for students who struggle with the writing process. Milner and Milner (2003) advocate for free writing, which involves students writing whatever they wish in journals to discover their own ideas and voices. Milner and Milner cited Fader and McNeil (1968) who found that implementing journals in schools led to students becoming more expressive, discovering their writing potential, and developing confidence in their abilities. To maximize the use of journals, guidelines from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) suggest that students write on loose-leaf notebooks, giving them autonomy over their writing and ensuring privacy for personal entries (Milner & Milner, 2003). Furthermore, actively engaging with students' writing, such as through group sharing and selective responses, enhances the significance of their writing and fosters a sense of community among writers (Milner & Milner, 2003).

### **Collaborative Writing: Fostering Collective Creativity**

Collaborative writing offers a dynamic approach to overcoming writer's block and fostering collaboration among students. Milner and Milner advocate for collaborative writing, which allows students to benefit from collective expertise and perspectives, fostering a positive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Collaborative writing is rooted in developmental theories, such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that language acquisition and development are social processes (Pham, 2021). For example, Atwell (1984) documents how collaborative writing facilitated peer sharing and discussion, enriching students' writing experiences and fostering a sense of community among writers.

### **Exploring Local Narratives through Environmental Journalism**

Environmental journalism provides a unique framework for integrating real-world experiences and local narratives into the writing process. By leveraging the surrounding environment as a source of inspiration and inquiry, students engage in immersive writing



experiences that foster a deeper understanding of their community and its diverse narratives. The Firefox lesson model proposed by Milner and Milner (2003) guides students through sequential stages of awareness, understanding, sense of community, investment of self-writing, and a desire to develop a rich, well-finished product. Interviews are central to environmental journalism, enabling students to explore the crafts and tools of the past and gather information from community members to inform their writing.

### **Fostering Dialogue and Perspective-Taking**

Dialogic methods emphasize the dynamic interplay of voices and perspectives in the writing process. By assuming diverse personas and engaging in robust dialogue, students refine their writing skills, cultivate critical thinking, and develop empathy and perspective-taking abilities (Reed, 2005). Bryan (2010) agrees with this view. She posits that “interaction through language is cognitive behaviour that induces thinking, probing and problem-solving” (p. 79). Activities such as role-playing, debate, and collaborative storytelling promote active engagement and participation, fostering a sense of ownership and agency among students as they explore diverse perspectives and narratives.

### **Navigating the Writing Process**

The writing process offers a structured framework for guiding students through the various stages of writing, from prewriting to publishing. By emphasizing student ownership, authentic audiences, and iterative refinement, the writing process equips students with the necessary tools for effective written communication across various contexts (Alber-Morgan et al., 2007). Activities such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing, coupled with peer review and feedback sessions, enable students to plan, organize, and refine their ideas effectively, ultimately producing polished and coherent written works. Maybin (1994) also

highlights the benefits of using the process approach to writing as a means of helping students to write proficiently.

### **Assessing Students' Writing in the Current Era**

The use of various methodologies to teach writing warrants the employment of appropriate assessment methods, especially in the post-COVID era. Sedita (2024) opines that frequently, when instructions for writing tasks are given to students, they lack specificity. She further explains that students often do not understand the purpose of the assignments given to them. Sedita cites Graham and Perin (2007), who postulate that teachers should set specific product goals regarding writing tasks. This clarity helps students understand what is expected of them and aligns their efforts with the intended learning outcomes. Apart from determining the writing objectives, Sedita (2024) also postulates that appropriate writing tasks should be given, and that students must be scaffolded to ensure they emerge as proficient writers. Scaffolding involves providing students with the necessary support and gradually reducing it as they become more competent. This process helps students develop their skills systematically and with confidence. In addition, teachers must provide appropriate feedback during the revision process to help students grow. Constructive feedback is essential for students to understand their strengths and areas needing improvement. It enables them to refine their work and develop a deeper understanding of writing conventions and techniques. Milner and Milner (2003) suggest the use of portfolios to assess students' writing. By using portfolios, teachers can examine multiple pieces of a student's work over time and choose the best ones to evaluate. This method offers a more comprehensive view of a student's writing abilities and progress. Portfolios allow for a more nuanced assessment, as they showcase a range of writing styles and topics, reflecting the student's growth and learning journey.

## **The Research Design**

Qualitative research is the most suitable approach for this study on "Unlocking creativity: Approaches to kickstart and sustain writing in the post-covid era" due to its focus on exploring the lived experiences, perceptions, and strategies of educators in response to the unique challenges posed by the pandemic. By employing qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study can capture the nuanced perspectives and context-specific factors influencing writing instruction. Qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of the complex social and cultural dynamics shaping educators' approaches to teaching writing, providing valuable insights that can inform policy and practice in education. Creswell (2014) sees this design as a means of exploring and understanding social or human issues (p.32)

## **Gaining Entry**

Gaining entry to the research site involved a structured process of communication and collaboration. Initially, permission to conduct the study was sought by drafting a formal letter addressed to the principal of the school, outlining the purpose, objectives, and methodology of the research. This letter detailed the potential benefits of the study to the school community and assured the principal of adherence to ethical guidelines and confidentiality protocols. Upon receiving approval from the principal, a subsequent letter was sent to the selected participants, the teachers of English, informing them of their invitation to participate in the study. This letter provided an overview of the research aims and procedures as well as assurances regarding confidentiality and data protection. By following this protocol of transparent communication and obtaining formal consent from both the school administration and participants, entry to the research site was facilitated in a manner that upheld ethical standards and fostered trust and cooperation among all stakeholders involved.

## **The Site**

The school is a co-educational institution situated on approximately twenty acres of land, offering ample space for various academic and extracurricular activities. The school population reflects a diverse community, comprising students from various cultural, socio-economic, and academic backgrounds.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study adopts a qualitative research design, aiming to delve deeply into the experiences and perspectives of teachers who navigated the challenges of teaching writing online during the Covid-19 pandemic. Qualitative research is particularly suited to capturing the nuances and complexities of human experiences, making it an appropriate choice for exploring the multifaceted nature of writing instruction in the post-pandemic era. Creswell (2014) opines that qualitative research entails delving into the subjective interpretations individuals or groups attach to social or human issues, involving a dynamic process of inquiry, data collection within participants' environments, inductive analysis to identify overarching themes, and the researcher's interpretation of the data's significance. Merriam (1998) emphasizes that qualitative researchers aim to understand how individuals perceive their experiences, how they construct their realities, and the meanings they assign to those experiences. The sample selected for this study consisted of two experienced teachers of English who actively taught throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and continue to do so presently. These educators possess a combined total of forty- two years teaching experience, having navigated the transition to online platforms amidst the pandemic and subsequently adapted their instructional approaches to suit the evolving needs of their students.

Data collection methods encompass interviews, observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended exploration of teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies in teaching writing online. The interview was structured according to Creswell's (2010) proposal of a semi-structured interview which was audiotaped and transcribed. Similarly, observation notes were collected based on the researcher's role as an observer. Observations provide insights into classroom dynamics, instructional practices, and student engagement during online writing sessions. Document analysis involves examining lesson plans. to supplement interview and observation data. Data analysis procedures involve a thematic approach, whereby interview transcripts, observation notes, and document excerpts are systematically coded and analysed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to the research questions. The analysis process emphasizes reflexivity, allowing for ongoing reflection and interpretation of the data to ensure rigor and validity.

Ethical considerations are paramount throughout the research process. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, ensuring they understand the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality of their responses. Measures are taken to protect participant anonymity and confidentiality, with all data stored securely and identifiers removed during analysis. Additionally, ethical guidelines for conducting research with human participants are followed closely to uphold the integrity and ethical standards of the study. Member checking was done to ensure that there is a true representation of the data collected in the interviews. Furthermore, triangulation was done to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with Ms. Smith and Mrs. Johnson (pseudonyms), supplemented by observations of their writing lessons. The interviews provided valuable insights into the teachers' perspectives on teaching writing during the pandemic, their preferred instructional approaches, and their views on the effectiveness of various writing strategies. The observations offered a firsthand glimpse into

the teachers' classroom practices, highlighting their pedagogical techniques, instructional methods, and interactions with students during writing activities.

### **Limitations of the Study**

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, which may impact the generalizability and validity of the findings. The study involved a small sample size of two teachers, limiting the breadth and diversity of perspectives represented. Additionally, the study focused on teachers' self-reported practices and perceptions, which may be subject to bias and social desirability. Furthermore, the study was conducted in a specific context and may not be applicable to other educational settings or contexts. Future research could address these limitations by using larger and more diverse samples, employing mixed-methods approaches, and exploring the effectiveness of different instructional approaches across various contexts and populations.

### **Findings**

**Question one: How do Jamaican educators perceive the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on student writing development in the post-Covid era?**

#### **Perceptions of the Impact of the Pandemic on Writing Development**

Both Ms. Smith and Ms. Johnson feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the way students develop as writers. Their observations highlight several key challenges encountered during the shift to online learning and the subsequent impact on students' writing skills.

#### **Reluctance to Write and Academic Integrity Issues**

Mrs. Johnson highlighted significant challenges with student engagement during online classes. She noted a marked reluctance among students to write when classes were

held remotely. This reluctance was exacerbated by the lack of in-person supervision, making it difficult for her to ensure students were actively participating and staying on task.

Moreover, Mrs. Johnson observed that students frequently resorted to copying and pasting information from the internet when assigned writing tasks. This not only impeded their ability to develop original writing skills but also raised concerns about academic integrity. Mrs. Johnson's observations regarding student engagement and writing behaviours during online classes align with the literature on challenges in online language learning highlighted by Tarrayo et al. (2022) referencing Baralt et al. (2016). Baralt et al.'s study found that student engagement in online language learning may be less effective compared to traditional classroom settings. Mrs. Johnson's experiences echo this sentiment, as she noted a marked reluctance among students to write during remote classes, indicating potential issues with engagement in online learning environments.

Furthermore, Mrs. Johnson's observation of students resorting to copying and pasting information from the internet during writing assignments resonates with the challenges identified by Tarrayo et al. (2022) regarding plagiarism in online learning contexts. This behaviour not only undermines students' development of original writing skills but also raises concerns about academic integrity, consistent with the findings of Baralt et al. (2016) regarding challenges such as plagiarism and late submission among students in online language learning.

### **Challenges in Maintaining Engagement and Motivation**

Ms. Smith also expressed concerns regarding the pandemic's impact on writing development. She particularly emphasized the difficulty in maintaining student engagement and motivation in a virtual environment. According to her, creating the same level of enthusiasm for writing as in a face-to-face classroom was a significant challenge. She

explained, “With limited face-to-face interaction, it’s been difficult to create the same level of connection and enthusiasm for writing that we would have in a traditional classroom setting.” This lack of engagement made it harder for students to immerse themselves in the writing process and develop a passion for writing.

### **Impact on Teacher-Student Connection**

Both educators pointed out that the pandemic-induced shift to online learning disrupted the teacher-student connection, which is vital for fostering a supportive learning environment. Mrs. Johnson’s inability to monitor students in person meant she could not provide immediate feedback or encouragement, which are crucial for developing writing skills. Similarly, Ms. Smith found that the absence of direct interaction hampered her ability to create a dynamic and interactive classroom atmosphere, further diminishing students' motivation and enthusiasm for writing.

**Question two: 2. How have teachers adapted their teaching methodologies and practices to address these challenges?**

### **Teachers' Adaptation of Teaching Methodologies and Practices**

In response to the challenges posed by the evolving educational landscape, teachers like Ms. Smith and Ms. Johnson have adapted their teaching methodologies and practices in various ways, particularly in writing instruction.

### **Journaling for Self-Expression and Autonomy**

Ms. Smith utilizes journaling to provide students with a personal outlet for self-expression and reflection. She believes that journals can promote autonomy and ownership of the writing process. She stated, “I believe journaling can be a valuable tool for teaching writing.” By incorporating journaling into her teaching, Ms. Smith has successfully



encouraged reluctant writers to begin writing. Conversely, Ms. Johnson acknowledges the benefits of journaling in aiding students to write but has not used it extensively in her classroom. The findings of this study align with existing literature on writing instruction and educational practices. Milner and Milner (2003) have emphasized the importance of providing students with opportunities for self-expression and reflection, as demonstrated by Ms. Smith's use of journaling

### **Collaborative Writing**

Ms. Smith also employs collaborative writing with her students, particularly for larger assignments. She explained, “For example, I might assign small groups of students to co-author a story or create a collaborative poem.” This method not only fosters teamwork but also enhances the writing process through peer collaboration. While Ms. Johnson has not extensively used collaborative learning, she recognizes its benefits. She noted that writing can often feel lonely, but when students work together, they can learn from each other. Milner and Milner (2003) have also highlighted the value of collaborative writing activities in fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and relevance in writing tasks, consistent with Ms. Smith's approach.

### **Dialogic Method and Environmental Journalism**

Ms. Smith incorporates the dialogic method to enhance her students' critical thinking skills. Additionally, she engages students through environmental journalism, encouraging them to write about real-world issues. She emphasized, “By connecting writing to topics that are relevant and meaningful to students, they are more likely to be motivated and interested in the writing process.”

Ms. Johnson, on the other hand, is not familiar with the dialogic method and has not used environmental journalism in her teaching practices. The findings align with the literature

on dialogic methods, as demonstrated by Ms. Smith's use of this approach to enhance her students' critical thinking skills, resonating with Reed's (2005) emphasis on refining writing through diverse perspectives. Furthermore, Ms. Smith's incorporation of environmental journalism reflects Bryan's (2010) assertion that interactive language activities promote cognitive engagement and problem-solving. Conversely, Ms. Johnson's unfamiliarity with these methods highlights the need for broader pedagogical training to ensure that all educators can effectively motivate and engage students through relevant and meaningful writing activities.

### **Process Writing**

Ms. Smith integrates process writing into her various approaches, emphasizing the importance of drafting, revising, and editing to improve students' writing skills.

Overall, these adaptations highlight the diverse strategies teachers have employed to address the challenges in writing instruction. By incorporating innovative methods like journaling, collaborative writing, and connecting writing to real-world issues, educators like Ms. Smith have created more engaging and effective learning experiences for their students. Meanwhile, Ms. Johnson recognizes the potential of these methods and their benefits, despite not having extensively implemented them in her classroom. The findings from Ms. Smith's and Ms. Johnson's classrooms demonstrate practical applications of the structured writing process highlighted in the literature. Alber-Morgan et al. (2007) describe the writing process as a framework that includes stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, all of which aim to develop students' writing skills through iterative refinement and engagement with authentic audiences. Ms. Smith's emphasis on drafting, revising, and editing aligns directly with this framework, showcasing its effectiveness in improving students' writing proficiency.

Additionally, the literature underscores the importance of activities like brainstorming, peer review, and feedback sessions in helping students plan, organize, and refine their ideas (Alber-Morgan et al., 2007). Ms. Smith's integration of these stages into her teaching approach reflects these principles, demonstrating how iterative processes and collaborative activities contribute to producing polished and coherent written works.

Moreover, Maybin (1994) supports the process approach to writing for its role in fostering proficient writing skills. Ms. Smith's practice of integrating process writing into her various instructional methods, including innovative strategies like journaling, collaborative writing, and connecting writing to real-world issues, exemplifies how this approach can be adapted to create engaging and effective learning experiences. This not only supports Maybin's assertion but also illustrates how these methods can address the challenges in writing instruction. Meanwhile, Ms. Johnson's recognition of the potential benefits of these methods, despite not having extensively implemented them, suggests an awareness of the value of the process approach described in the literature. Her acknowledgment reinforces the idea that the process writing framework, with its emphasis on student ownership and iterative refinement, is a recognized and valuable strategy for enhancing writing instruction.

**Question three: How have Jamaican educators adapted their writing instruction assessment methods in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the transition from online learning modalities?**

#### **Grading Journal Entries to Validate Student Efforts**

Ms. Smith implemented a strategy of grading selected journal entries, which gave credence to students' writing efforts. By assigning grades to specific entries, she provided students with tangible recognition of their work, thereby encouraging them to take their journaling more seriously. This approach not only validated their efforts but also motivated

them to engage more deeply with their writing, knowing that their work would be assessed and valued.

### **Setting Specific Goals for Writing Tasks**

Both Ms. Smith and Mrs. Johnson emphasized the importance of setting specific goals when assigning writing tasks. By clearly defining what was expected in each assignment, they helped students focus on particular aspects of their writing, whether it was improving grammar, developing stronger arguments, or enhancing creativity. Setting these specific goals provided students with clear targets to aim for, making the writing process more structured and purposeful.

### **Defining Specific Purposes for Writing**

Additionally, both educators stressed the importance of assigning writing tasks with a specific purpose in mind. By clarifying the purpose behind each assignment, they helped students understand the relevance and application of their writing. Whether the purpose was to inform, persuade, entertain, or reflect, knowing the intended outcome guided students in tailoring their writing to meet the objectives of the task. This clarity helped students see the value in their writing assignments and how they could apply these skills in various contexts.

The findings from Ms. Smith's and Ms. Johnson's classrooms effectively illustrate the application of key principles outlined in the literature regarding writing instruction and assessment. Sedita (2024) emphasizes the importance of specificity in writing instructions and the need for students to understand the purpose of their assignments. Both Ms. Smith and Ms. Johnson addressed this by setting specific goals for writing tasks, thus aligning with Sedita's recommendation. By clearly defining the expected outcomes, they helped students focus on particular aspects of their writing, such as grammar, argument development, or

creativity. This clarity ensured that students understood what was expected of them, aligning their efforts with the intended learning outcomes, as advocated by Graham and Perin (2007).

Moreover, Sedita (2024) highlights the necessity of appropriate writing tasks and scaffolding to support students' development as proficient writers. Ms. Smith's approach of grading selected journal entries not only provided tangible recognition of students' efforts but also served as a form of scaffolding. By giving feedback on specific entries, she offered constructive guidance that helped students improve their writing over time. This method of assessment also aligns with Sedita's emphasis on the importance of feedback during the revision process, as it helps students understand their strengths and areas needing improvement, thus fostering their growth as writers.

Additionally, both educators' practice of assigning writing tasks with specific purposes in mind is reflective of Sedita's (2024) assertion that understanding the purpose behind assignments helps students see their relevance and application. By clarifying whether the purpose was to inform, persuade, entertain, or reflect, Ms. Smith and Ms. Johnson guided students in tailoring their writing to meet these objectives. This approach helped students appreciate the value of their assignments and understand how their writing skills could be applied in various contexts.

The use of portfolios, as suggested by Milner and Milner (2003), is another aspect of the literature that resonates with the findings. Although the specific use of portfolios is not mentioned in the findings, the practice of grading selected journal entries can be seen as a step towards a portfolio-based assessment. By evaluating multiple pieces of work over time, teachers can gain a more comprehensive view of a student's writing abilities and progress. Ms. Smith's strategy of grading specific entries can be seen as a way to encourage students to

produce their best work consistently, similar to how portfolios allow for a detailed assessment of a student's growth and learning journey.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that Jamaican educators continue to explore and implement innovative approaches to writing instruction, particularly in the face of ongoing challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Emphasizing the importance of face-to-face interactions and culturally relevant pedagogy, educators should prioritize creating inclusive learning environments that address disparities exacerbated by the pandemic, such as the digital divide. Additionally, policymakers are encouraged to consider the insights gleaned from this study when developing education policies, with a focus on supporting educators and enhancing student outcomes. Collaboration among stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and community members, is essential in navigating the complexities of writing instruction in the post-Covid era and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study have significant implications for writing instruction and educational practices in Jamaica and beyond. By highlighting the diverse approaches employed by Jamaican educators to address the challenges of writing instruction during the pandemic, the study provides valuable insights into effective teaching strategies and pedagogical innovations in remote or hybrid learning environments. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of fostering a culture of writing among students to enhance their writing skills and promote critical thinking and communication abilities in the post-Covid era.

## References

- Alber-Morgan, S.R., Hessler, T., & Konrad, M. (2007). Teaching writing for keeps. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 30(3), 107-128.
- Atwell, N. (1984). Writing and Reading Literature from the Inside Out. *Language Arts*, 61(3), 240-252. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41405162>
- Blackman, S. N. J. (2022). *The impact of Covid-19 on education equity: A view from Barbados and Jamaica. Cases/Trends*, Sage Journals 51, 611–625.
- Bryan, B. (2010). *Between Two Grammars: Research and Practice for Language Learning and Teaching in a Creole-speaking Environment*. Ian Randle Publishers.
- Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Cummings, R. (2023). Post-pandemic digital writing instruction will be Resilient, Open, and Inclusive. *Journal of university teaching & learning practice*, 20 (2), Article 11.
- Lewis-Fokum, Y. Moore, S & Spencer, A.T. (2021). Talk the poem: Re-positioning poetry recitation as transformative pedagogy. *Caribbean journal of education*, 43 (1). 85-106  
<https://doi.org/1046425/c064301y823>
- Maybin, J. (1994). Teaching writing: Process or genre. In S. Brindley (Ed.), *Teaching English*. Routledge.
- Merriam S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass.

Milner J., & Milner L. (2003). *Bridging, English*. Prentice Hall.

Milson-Whyte, V. (2015). *Academic writing instruction for Creole-influenced students*.

University of the West Indies Press.

Moore, S.& Lewis-Fokum, Y. (2016). The hidden curriculum and learner autonomy fostering pedagogical and professional development in pre- and in-service teachers of English.

*UWI quality education forum*

Pham, V. P. H. (2021, March 5). Effects of Collaborative Writing on Students' Writing

Fluency: An Efficient Framework for Collaborative Writing. *Sage Journals*.

Reed, M. (2005) Strong language: The purpose of dialogue in the development of

writing. *Changing English*, 12(1), 85-102.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244021998363>

Sedita, J. (2024). *Planning effective writing assignments WAG ((Writing assignment guide)*

Tarrayo, V. N., Anudin, A. G., Mendoza, H. B., & Parungao-Callueng, E. S. (2022).

Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Writing Online Amidst the Pandemic:

Voices from English Language Teachers in Philippine Universities. *Australian*

*Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(4), Article 5.

Trotta, R. (2023, April 3). The Impact of Covid on Education in Jamaica. Retrieved from

<https://ragnitrotta.org.uk/2023/04/the-impact-of-covid-on-education-in-jamaica/>