By Writers for Writers: A collaboratively constructed model of the writing process (0234)

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Understanding one's writing process helps take control of the process, (Elbow, 1998). Models of the writing process have been used to facilitate this understanding of the writing process (Deane, 2009).

This presentation will discuss how one international, mixed-gender group of postgraduate writers, finding established models of the writing process unsatisfactory, collaboratively constructed their own model.

Data collected were audio-recordings, reflective journals, questionnaires and interviews. Results indicated that the development and use of the model 1) helped writers move on with the process when they found themselves "stuck", 2) helped establish a common language for talking about writing, and 3) helped understanding and articulation of feedback needs.

This model is descriptive rather than prescriptive; it has been used not as a set formula to be taken as-is and imposed, but rather as a starting point from which other writers can discover, develop and use their own representations of their writing processes.

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Outlines (max 1000 words)

This proposed presentation is intended for people who are interested in helping student-writers understand, and take control of their writing processes. It will examine a model of the writing process that was made by student writers, for the use of student writers. The presentation will include an explanation of how the model was constructed, a description of how it was used by the writers who made it, and suggestions for how it might be of use to other writers.

It is believed that understanding one's writing process will help one take control of that process, rather than be immobilised by it (Elbow and Belanoff, 2003). One method that has been used by writing centres to facilitate this understanding is to present students with a model of the writing process (Dean, M. 20/6/2009 personal communication).

A major criticism of the process-writing movement, however, is that it either holds, or has been mistaken to hold, the view that models of the writing process, after they are designed, are generalisable, or exportable, and useable to many writers in many contexts (Kent, 1999). Taking this criticism one step further, most models of the writing process, which students are meant to use, are designed by teachers of writing, or by other experts on writing, rather than by student-writers themselves. As such, they might not prove as useful in promoting student understanding as might be hoped.

This presentation will discuss how one international, mixed-gender group of MA TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) writers found the available models of the writing process to be unsatisfactory: The models simply did not resonate as being understandable or useable representations of their individual writing processes. In response to the lack of a satisfactory model, this group of six students, along with one researcher, collaboratively constructed their own model of the writing process.

Data collected were audio-recordings of writers' group meetings, members' reflective journals, questionnaires and interviews. All data were examined, and excerpts containing information about the process of students' writing were culled. A small corpus was made of this selected text; all verbs and lexical signals were extracted from the corpus. The verbs were categorized, and then using the lexical signals, the researcher compiled a model that reflected the data. This model was presented to the students, and adjusted until all agreed that it satisfactorily represented their writing processes.

Results indicated that the development and use of the writing process model helped the student writers understand their own writing processes better, and helped them take control of the writing process. Specifically, the awareness of their writing process helped the writers move on with the process when they found themselves "stuck." The model was also used by the students to establish a common language for talking about writing, and to help them understand and articulate their in-process feedback needs.

Although this model has since resonated with, and been found to be useful by, other writers, (both students and faculty members), it is intended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. As such, it is presented not as a set formula that is to be taken as-is and imposed, but rather as a starting point from which groups or individual writers can discover, develop and use their own representations of their writing processes.

Elbow, P. & Belanoff, P. (2003). *Being a Writer: A community of writers revisited*. New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.
Kent, T. (ed.) (1999) *Post-process Theory: Beyond the writing process paradigm*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.