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BRIDGING THEORY AND APPLICATION IN ACADEMIC WRITING: STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING AND REAL-WORLD INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION [ABSTRACT]

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The purpose is to examine existing practices through an applied application lens as it relates to understanding theory and application in academic writing, and to identify best practices for developing academic skills to bridge the gap between theory and application in higher education. The problem is students struggle to produce work demonstrating critical thinking and analysis to align with course concepts and real-world application
Background	The study underscores the importance of integrating explicit instruction on writing into the curriculum.
Methodology	Qualitative research will be used to gather the lived experiences of higher education instructors.
Contribution	The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform the development of collective, institution-wide strategies to address student writing needs. By recognizing the cognitive demands of academic writing, higher education institutions can design instructional practices that align with students' cognitive capabilities

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Findings	Faculty can adopt strategies such as modeling the writing process, providing detailed feedback, and encouraging iterative drafts to help students develop their skills progressively.
Recommendations for Practitioners	By addressing the gap between thinking and writing, higher education institutions can better equip students to meet academic demands and succeed in their studies. Recognizing the role of cognitive processes in writing challenges is a crucial step toward developing effective, evidence-based interventions that enhance both learning and academic performance.
Recommendations for Researchers	To address the gap between thinking and writing, researchers can focus on interdisciplinary collaboration, mixed-methods research, longitudinal studies, technology-enhanced research, contextualized research, teacher education, student-centered approaches, and effective assessment to develop evidence-based interventions that enhance both learning and academic performance.
Impact on Society	Improving student writing skills can lead to more effective communicators, critical thinkers, and innovative problem-solvers in our communities. This can support societal progress and a more informed citizenry.
Future Research	Future research is needed to deepen understanding of the interplay between cognition and writing and to address gaps in the literature. Specifically, studies could examine how different instructional practices influence the development of writing skills over time and explore the role of technology, such as AI-assisted writing tools, in supporting student learning
Keywords	student writing, information literacy, cognition, applied application, critical thinking, academic skills

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Dr. Matasha MurrellJones earned a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership and an MBA in International Business. She also earned graduate certificates in Data Analytics and Project Management. She is an accomplished and results-oriented Director of Learning with a proven track record in designing and implementing successful educational programs. Dr. MurrellJones is focused on the creation of innovative learning strategies to promote inclusion and educational support in higher education. Matasha's leadership extends to her role as Lead Faculty, where she oversees program strategy, faculty management, and academic excellence. Her dedication to advancing knowledge is evident in her global publications and presentations, where she explores topics such as strategic partnering for dissertation development, cultural diversity in multinational teams, supporting scholarship for graduates, and bridging the gap between theory and application in academic writing. Dr. MurrellJones has attained a research fellowship where she studied best practices for mentors when partnering with doctoral candidates for the successful completion of the doctoral project. Dr. MurrellJones continues to seek opportunities to learn, engage in research and presentations to support the student learning experience.



Dr. Imani Akin earned an MS in Special Education, an EdD in Educational Leadership, and an MBA in Data Analytics. She is deeply committed to fostering collaboration that effectively addresses the academic and social-emotional needs of all learners. As an educational leader, Dr. Akin has designed and led impactful professional development sessions, empowering educators to enhance their capacity for implementing response to intervention strategies in both K-12 and higher education environments. Dr. Akin is a faculty member of the doctoral research department and serves as a dissertation chair. Recognized for her passion for research, Dr. Akin was awarded a grant to lead a research team focused on

exploring the needs of doctoral graduates as they seek to launch and expand their scholarly activity. This research was later published and evolved into a model for identifying and engaging in research to build new knowledge. Dr. Akin continues this work and still serves as a Research Fellow to support research activities. A strong advocate for the power of collegiate dialogue, Dr. Akin consistently seeks out opportunities to collaborate, present, and publish research, furthering the ongoing growth and innovation within the educational community.