



# NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF OFFICE ASSISTANTS’ BUSINESS WRITING SKILLS: BASIS FOR A TRAINING DESIGN

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## ABSTRACT

Office assistants are the supporting arm of the office heads. One of their roles is to write correspondence and other documents on behalf of their office, hence requiring them to be proficient in writing. This study aims to conceptualize a training that is tailored-fit for the office assistants to help them enhance their writing skills. The study uses the descriptive design particularly, the triangulation method in analyzing and validating qualitative data since most of the data gathered were qualitative in nature. The data were collected through the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) Survey Questionnaire, Business Writing Test (BWT), and Semi-Structured Interview (SSI). Questionnaires were distributed to the 27 respondents, five of which were selected for SSI. Results were then analyzed using frequency and percentage counts, weighted arithmetic mean, Standard Deviation (SD), T-test, Analysis of Variance, Pearson *r* and Grounded Theory Analysis. Results showed no significant difference on the respondents’ level of business writing skills and demographic profiles. Self-assessment also indicated no significant relationship with their business writing skills. Nevertheless, it was found that the office assistants still need business writing training to improve their business writing skills in terms of voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

**KEYWORDS:** training needs analysis, business writing, office assistants, training design, skills.

## INTRODUCTION

Business writing is one of the most sought-after micro skills in English by employers from all sectors. However, there were several reports which document the employers’ dismay on the workforces’ inadequate business writing skills. In 2008, the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) revealed that 56.4 percent of employers cited writing as the weakest area among the “hard” skills of UK graduates. The same is true in the United States. The existence of significant dissatisfaction with the writing performance of entry-level public relations practitioners was confirmed through a survey of members of the largest public relations association. Dissatisfaction occurs across all measured categories of writing for public relations and general business writing. The survey of Cole, Hembroff and Corner (2009) suggests a significant need for increased attention in training for future PR practitioners.

A study about the English Language Communication Training Needs of Front Office Assistants (Chan, 2002) verified that the hotels in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) felt the necessity of providing training to their front-line employees in the area of English language because it is essential for upgrading the quality of customer service. These writing skill deficiency issues are also present in our country. As reported by Hachero (2012), former Land Transportation Office-National Capital Region (LTO-NCR) Director Teofilo Guadiz III noticed the poor writing ability and English grammar of the officials and employees assigned at the 27 district offices of the agency all over



Metro Manila. Thus, he initiated a program designed to improve their writing skills and knowledge on the English language.

In Davao City, the Holy Cross of Davao College, Inc. (HCDC) also faces the same problem. As a dynamic and robust organization, HCDC regularly evaluates the job performance of its workforce. Through its current assessment scheme, the office heads have expressed negative feedback on the writing skill of their assistants. To close the gap between the expectation of the office heads and the performance of the subordinates, HCDC must perform its “responsibility to secure, train, and develop its human resources...” (HCDC Institutional Administrative Manual, 2004). Hence, the researchers aim to conduct an in-depth needs assessment that would identify the specific business writing skill deficiencies of the HCDC Office Assistants in all campuses. The needs assessment is the first stage of the training process that identifies the gaps in human resource performance. The output that would be obtained from the needs assessment would be used as the input for designing a training program that would remediate or enhance the writing skills of the concerned employees enabling them to deliver their functions satisfactorily. As an asset to the organization, HCDC employees, particularly the Office Assistants, should be subjected to training to ensure that their knowledge, skills, and abilities could contribute to the goal of HCDC towards organizational excellence.

It is for this reason that this study was conducted as a response to the Human Resource Office’s 2012-2013 Annual Action Plan (AAP) where it aimed to carry out needs assessment for the growth and development of the faculty and staff – most especially to the staff assigned in the support service offices. The primary beneficiaries of this study are the OAs. This would help them identify the aspects of business writing which they need to improve and will enable them to perform proficiently and efficiently in their tasks. This study would also help the office heads in performing managerial or supervisory jobs as their time for correcting typographical and grammatical errors in correspondences will be lessened. Furthermore, the Human Resource Office would be able to identify and conceptualize trainings and seminars that would suit the needs of their staff thus saving not only expenses but also time. This study would serve as baseline information for other researchers who want to take on training needs assessments for employees in the academe and in other sectors which require business writing. This study is focused on determining the level of business writing skills (BWS) of the Office Assistants of HCDC according to their age, gender, educational attainment, and length of service. The identification of the level of BWS is limited to their knowledge or familiarity in terms of ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to minimize weaknesses and reach a deeper understanding of the area. This approach of integrating two or more methods within a single research design is called “triangulation”. According to Bryman and Bell (as cited by Ghufli, 2009), triangulation approach attempts to “cancel out the limitations of one method by the use of another in order to cross-check the findings.” Triangulation is also a means of establishing the validity of qualitative studies according to the study of Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2011). This study used the descriptive design using triangulation approach in which the qualitative data supported and enhanced the quantitative data.

### **Research Locale and Respondents**

The study was conducted at the Holy Cross of Davao College, Inc. (HCDC) in its primary address at Sta. Ana Avenue, Davao City and its Basic Education Bajada Campus located at SOS Drive, Bajada Davao City. This study used the non-probability sampling method, specifically, the convenience sampling scheme in selecting the respondents. The data were collected from the respondents who are conveniently available to participate and to support the contention of the researcher. This method enabled the researcher to achieve the desired sample size in a relatively fast and inexpensive way. These respondents are the office assistants who were directly involved in office communication. The training needs of the respondents on business writing skills were targeted and were assessed in this study. HCDC had 32 office assistants who were hired between 1983 to 1 June 2012, but only 27 took part in this study.



### Research Instruments

The Training Needs Assessment (TNA) survey questionnaire was used in gathering data to determine the demographic profile of the respondents, their training needs/ preferences, writing skills self-assessment and the relationship between the result of self-assessment of writing skills and their business writing skills test score. The questionnaire is composed of three parts. For the first part, the respondents provided their personal data. While indicating their full name is optional, the rest of the items such as assigned work unit, age, gender, highest educational attainment, and length of service were filled in by putting a check mark on the corresponding box. The second part which is composed of ten (10) items aimed to know what the training needs and preferences of the OAs are. The facts drawn from this part were inputs for the training program designed according to the needs which are identified by the respondents themselves. The third part required the respondents to rate their writing performance against the 15 enumerated writing activities. These activities include writing a cover letter, letters of complaint, inquiry, invitation and request. Also listed as activities are, writing a memorandum, notice of meeting, reply to the complaint, strategic plan, announcement, e-mail, incident report, agenda of meeting, and minutes of the meeting; editorial tasks such as proofreading and editing were also taken into account.

Brown (2002) also stated that a test is one of the effective methods in identifying employees' training needs. Hence, in addition to the TNA survey questionnaire, a Business Writing Test (BWT) was administered among the respondents to determine the level of their knowledge or familiarization about business letters and the level of their business writing skills in terms of ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions. The Business Writing Test used in this study was adopted and modified from the Final Mind Exercises of the 2011 edition of Joel Joseph L. Egipto's book on Writing Business Letters. The test was composed of two parts. This writing task was measured using the adapted and modified Six Trait Analytic Writing Rubric. The original Six Trait Analytic Writing Rubric was from Arizona Department of Education. This measured if the traits on ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions were present in the business writing output of the respondents.

### Data Treatment

The statistical techniques used in the interpretation of data and testing the null hypotheses are the frequency and percentage counts, weighted arithmetic mean, Standard Deviation (SD), T-Test and F-Test or Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ) and the Grounded Theory Analysis. The descriptive analysis using frequency and percentage counts was used in describing the nature and demographic characteristics of the Office Assistants while the weighted arithmetic mean was applied in determining the level of the respondents' knowledge or familiarization in business letter writing (Test I). The researchers and inter-raters then utilized the modified Six Trait Analytic Writing Rubric in scoring the writing skill of the respondents for the second part of the BWT. On the third part of the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) survey questionnaire, the respondents were made to assess their writing skills. The scores of the respondents on the second part of the BWT were evaluated vis-à-vis their categories according to age, gender, educational attainment, and length of service. The formula of Standard Deviation (SD), T-Test, F-test or ANOVA and Pearson  $r$  was used in knowing the possibility of having a significant difference on the level of the respondents' business writing skills when grouped based on the aforesaid four variables. The Pearson  $r$  on the other hand was used to determine the significant relationship between the result of the respondents' self-assessment of their writing skills (Test III of the TNA) and the scores gained by them in the Test II of the BWT. Lastly, the Grounded Theory Analysis was used for the SSI. The transcripts of the one-on-one interviews were utilized to extract the indicators of the need for a writing training for the respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Office Assistants' Profile

The data show that out of the 27 Office Assistants, 10 (37.04 %) of them belong to the 25 to 29 years old age bracket. While such numerical value represents the majority, the minority group is represented by 2 (7.41%) Office Assistants for age brackets 40 to 44 and 45 to 49 respectively. In terms of gender, the demographic information further showed that 16 (59.26 %) Office Assistants are females and 11 (40.74 %) are males. For the highest educational attainment, 9 (33.33 %) Office Assistants attained a Baccalaureate degree, 16 (59.26 %) have units in Master and 2 (7.41 %) graduated with master's degree. As regards to the length of service, 16 (59.26 %)



office assistants served HCDC for less than five years, 3 (11.11 %) worked for 5 to 9 years, 6 (22.22 %) stayed for 10 to 14 years, while 1 (3.70 %) was employed for 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years accordingly.

### **Office Assistants' Level of Knowledge or Familiarization of Business Writing**

Based on the gathered data, 15 (f) out of 27 respondents obtained a score between 25-32; this means that 56 percent of the population of the HCDC Office Assistants are much knowledgeable when it comes to business letter writing. On the other hand, 12 (f) of them which is equivalent to 44 percent garnered a score between 17-24 which means that they are moderately knowledgeable in business letter writing. All in all, the respondents have an average mean of 25 which shows a descriptive level of much knowledgeable in business letter writing. Findings showed that most of them are much knowledgeable or familiar with Business Letter Writing. During the Semi-Structured Interview (SSI), the respondents concurred that the BWT test is basic hence its level of difficulty is not that high. The level of familiarity or knowledge of the respondents on business letter writing could also be attributed to the fact that they had it (business letter writing) during their scholastic years. Some of the respondents claimed that it was part of their college curriculum; hence some parts are already familiar. In addition, the parts of a regular letter and a business letter are almost the same, so it is not new to them. What the respondents only need is the sharpening of the skills so that they could become better on it.

The same positive result was also yielded from the College Board Survey (2004) wherein a significant proportion of responding firms report that one-third or fewer of their employees, both current and new, possess the writing skills companies' value. Also, those basic concepts had been put into application as they performed some of the writing tasks in their respective offices. Nevertheless, the respondents' knowledge/familiarity in business letter writing is not a guarantee that they could already compose effective business letters especially when assessed in terms of ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. This means that the respondents' writing skills still have to be developed in some areas and because of this need, the respondents must be admitted to training. As indicated by Bingham (2012), once there is a need or requirement to improve one's performance, training becomes necessary. Moreover, this procedure of identifying the respondents' current level of skill and knowledge was patterned from the premise of Erasmus et. al (2000) and Van Dyk et.al (1997), this step is part of the Task Analysis Phase in the training needs assessment.

### **Office Assistants' Level of Business Writing Skills**

The data revealed that the business writing skills of the Office Assistants has a mean rate of 3.52 for Ideas and Content which means that it is on the Advanced Level. On the other hand, Organization, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions have a mean rate of 3.39, 3.13, 3.04, 3.11, and 3.02 respectively. These indicate that the writing traits of the respondents are on the Developing Level. Consequently, the total mean rate of the Office Assistants is 3.20 denoting that the business writing skills of the respondents are on Developing Level.

The respondents' level of business writing skills is found to be in the advanced level when it comes to Ideas and Content while in terms of Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions it is still developing. In other words, most of the respondents were able to convey their ideas on the letter of invitation to the School President (Test II of the BWT) evidently with some support though general or limited. In addition, their letters showed an attempt on organization, only the beginning and ending are undeveloped. This also goes with the voice which showed inappropriateness, this made the writing seemed mechanical. With regard the word choices, although the usage is correct some are mundane, and it seemed that they made no attempt to deliberate choice. Sentences showed some awkward construction with many similar patterns and beginnings and the control of conventions is limited; however, the frequent errors did not interfere with understanding.

The invitation letters written by the office assistants effectively showed one clear focus with a thorough presentation of the development details. Their merit in this aspect can be considered as an advantage especially that according to Sonnenberg (2009), the content of e-mail communications (and other correspondences) can make a difference between satisfaction and dissatisfaction on the part of customers. College Board Survey (2004) also places high regard on this aspect as it stated the significance of conveying the content in a tight, logical and direct manner.



In terms of the ‘Organization’ trait, the respondents have a mean rate of 3.39 which classifies them in the Developing Level. This implies that they attempted to organize their thoughts in the invitation letter and might have created a “list” of events to serve as their guide. However, the structure, introduction and conclusion were undeveloped, and their efforts remained inadequate. Meanwhile, the office assistants’ mean rate for the ‘Voice’ trait is 3.13 or at the Developing Level. This infers that the respondents’ invitation letters lack personality and sense of audience making the correspondence seem emotionless and too technical. Additionally, results show that the respondents are weak in the areas of Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions.

The main instrument for the assessment of the respondents’ Business Writing Skills was the adapted and modified Six Trait Analytic Writing Rubric from Arizona Department of Education. Thus, it would be appropriate to anchor the interpretation of the result from the definition provided by the Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). It described ‘Word Choice’ as the writer’s ability to use distinct words to convey the intended message. The organization’s definition matched the “Word Choice” description of Driggers (2013) that it is the selection and usage of one word over the other words that have similar pronunciations, meanings, or spellings. With the mean rate of only 3.04 (Developing Level), this means that the respondents fall short in creating a mental picture for the reader and they were unable to use words that are specific and accurate. Suttle (2013) as mentioned in the prior chapter recognizes the importance of possessing the Word Choice Skill because inappropriate words and crude written communications will lead to trouble in the organization. The present level of the respondents’ skill in Word Choice makes them susceptible in creating erroneous written instructions which can lead to misunderstanding and incorrect procedures. Wilkie (2007) cautioned the writers that interdepartmental miscommunication caused by ineffective letters can result to fragmentation of the workforce and other adverse effects.

The respondents also ranked in the developing level for Sentence Fluency. From the point of view of Steele (2007), sentence fluency is present when there is readability of the paper and if its fragments improve the quality of the message. Anchoring from the AIMS’ definition of Sentence Fluency, the result means that the respondents should develop their skills in creating a rhythm and flow of language with sentence structures that are strong and varied. There is a call for the respondents to be trained in this area because as remarked by Wilkie (2007), mangled syntax can cause expensive confusion, inconvenience or even danger. Sonnenberg (2009) also gave a warning that business documents that do not conform to these guidelines put the organization at risk of lawsuits caused by ambiguous language.

The respondents’ level of business writing skills in terms of Conventions is in the Developing Level. This rating is a clear manifestation of their need to upgrade their skills particularly in the mechanics of business writing, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraph breaks and grammar. Xaxx (2013) as reflected in the previous chapter said that an employee who struggles with composition, spelling and other writing basics will be held back in his/her career until there is an improvement of his/her skills in writing. Brooks (2013) reported the same predicament at Business News Daily citing Zugec, Managing Director of the Workforce Consultants, who said that spelling and grammatical errors could break an employee. This is probably the reason why quite several of the office assistants stayed in their position for several years. Most of the respondents in this study are in their mid-20s and majority of them ranked low in the Convention Trait, this coincides with the survey by the Society for Human Resource Management that the ability to write English clearly with correct spelling is one of the attributes that give older workers an edge over younger employers. The level of the respondents’ business writing level skills in terms of Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Convention is incongruent with the College Board’s study which identified that the most sought-after writing traits are accuracy, clarity, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and conciseness.

### **Results of the Training Needs Assessment (TNA)**

The respondents were also asked if they were given a training on business writing during their employment and only 7 (25.93 %) answered yes while the large half which is composed of 20 (74.07 %) respondents gave no as an answer. The respondents who answered that they were given training on business writing were further asked if the training helped them perform better at their writing tasks or if such activity was able to provide a base and better understanding of the job. All seven of the respondents confirmed that the training did help them improve their business writing skills. When asked about their preferred approach to learning a writing task, only 8 (29.63 %) of the respondents opted for a lecture approach, while the remaining 19 (70.37 %) chose an experiential approach. Twenty-five (92.59 %) respondents preferred an external facilitator should a training be conducted. One respondent which



corresponds to 3.70 percent of the population preferred an internal facilitator while the other one bearing the equal percentage answered both (external and internal facilitator). According to the respondent who made the latter option, she opted for this because it does not matter whether the facilitator is external or internal as long as “he/she is master of the topic” and has an authority in the field of business writing.

About the learning style, 11 (40.74 %) respondents are visual learners. Sixteen of them, which is 59.26 percent claimed to be both visual and auditory learners. For the seventh question of the TNA, the respondents were asked what training method would benefit them the most. They were allowed to check all the items which are applicable for them. When the training methods were ranked, it is lecture method which was chosen by 25 (92.59 %) respondents, it was the highest among all the 8 methods. On the other hand, the use of audio/visual tapes was ranked the least as opted by only 14 (51.85 %) respondents. The utilization of slides/overheads and workbooks as chosen by 18 (66.67 %) respondents served as median. When asked about their preferred training duration, 13 (48.15 %) office assistants chose to have a whole day training session for business writing. Eleven (40.74 %) respondents opted for a series of business writing training sessions while only 3 (11.11 %) out of the 27 respondents wanted to schedule the training on a half-day. Item 9 of the TNA survey questionnaire asked the respondents of their preferred month when to schedule the training, 11 (40.74 %) respondents selected January-April. Eight respondents chose to have it slated on May-August while the remaining 8 (29.63 %) of the cohort would rather have the training in September-December. As to the training class size, 17 (62.96 %) preferred engaging with 10 to 20 training participants while the 10 (37.04 %) opted for a bigger training class size with 20 to 30 participants.

**Office Assistants’ Writing Skill Self-Assessment**

Among all the activities presented in the study, the respondents are least confident when it comes to writing a strategic plan with a weighted mean of 2.48 which interprets to emerging level while they are most confident with writing emails with a weighted mean of 3.44. The rest of the activities are all in developing level. The top activities the respondents are most confident in doing are the following: Writing an email (3.44), Writing an announcement (3.41), Writing a letter of invitation (3.26), Writing a notice of meeting and letter of request both at 3.22. Contrariwise, the activities the respondents are least confident in doing are the following: Writing an incident report and a reply to a complaint (2.74), Writing a letter of complaint (2.73), Writing a memorandum (2.67), Proofreading and editing (2.56) , and Writing a strategic plan (2.48).Furthermore, the respondents assessed their skills in Writing the agenda of the meeting at 3.15, Writing a letter of inquiry at 3.07, and Writing the minutes of the meeting and cover letter at 3.04.

The overall mean for the level of the respondents’ self-assessment is at 2.98 which falls on the Developing Level. This means that most of the respondents have developing written communication skills but needs more understanding on business writing. It further implies that the respondents can write correspondence but have to improve in its clarity and conciseness. The result of this self-assessment would explain why in the performance evaluation some of the office heads commented on their subordinates’ level of business writing skills. The respondents have rated themselves at Developing Level in all activities except for writing a strategic plan where they have assessed their skills to be at the Emerging level.

**Significant Difference of the Office Assistants’ Level of Business Writing Skills When Grouped According to Profile**

**Table 2**  
*Significant Difference on the Level of Business Writing Skills of Office Assistants when grouped according to their demographic profile*

Profile	N	Mean	SD	F-Value/ t-value*	p-Value	Decision
<b>Age</b>						
20-24	8	3.25	.42			
25-29	10	3.17	.60	.242	.912	Accept Ho, NS
30-34	3	3.03	.62			
35-39	4	3.00	.82			



<b>Gender</b>						
Male	11	3.05	.27			
Female	16	3.19	.67	-.694*	.494	Accept Ho, NS
<b>Educational Attainment</b>						
Baccalaureate	9	3.05	.52			
Master's Units	16	3.24	.51			
Graduate (Master's Degree)	2	2.67	.94	1.201	.318	Accept Ho, NS
<b>Length of Service</b>						
5-9	16	3.1831	.58080			
10-14	3	3.0300	.31432			
15-19	6	2.9433	.59051	.463	.762	Accept Ho, NS
20-24	1	3.2500	.			
25-29	1	3.6700	.			

The result of this study is in contrast with the findings of Shellenbarger (2012) where they cited that younger employees are not that competent when it comes to writing compared to older ones. According to their study, employees who are in their 20s and 30s have poor writing skills which could be the result of habitual texting and social networking. On the other hand, Loten's (2006) study revealed that most HR managements are dismayed with the hired graduates because of their lacking skills in written communication. These contentions have no bearing in this study as the result shows that age does not play a significant role to the respondents' level of business writing skills. The argument whether males are better than females when it comes to writing is still at large (Palladino, 2007; Buckingham, 2012). Some studies pointed out though that women tend to be more personal and write lengthy letters while men are more direct to the point (Cockcroft, 2009). Women are classified as "involved" writers while men are "informational" (Argamon, Koppel, Fine, & Shimoni, 2006). However, academically speaking, women are far better than men as demonstrated in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and as cited by Whitmire and Bailey (2011). As reflected in Table 2, gender does not contribute to the level of business writing skills of the respondents. It is a common connotation that those who graduated with higher degrees are more competent compared to those who are not. Most studies show that graduate degree holders have more edge over bachelor's degree holders when it comes to problem solving and communication skills proficiency (Fischer, 2012). However, this is not true in this study as educational statement has no bearing at the level of business writing skills of the respondents. The length of service of an employee is sometimes disregarded over skills. The length of service does not define an employees' skill set unless the employee was given the opportunity to hone the skills the company needs (Kjorstad, 2003). In this study, it is proven that the length of service of the respondents does not affect the level of their business writing skills.

### Significant Relationship Between the Result of Self-Assessment and Business Writing Skills

**Table 3**  
*Significant Relationship between the Result of Self-assessment and Business Writing Skills of Office Assistants*

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Decision/Interpretation
Self-assessment and Business Writing Skills	-.106	.598	Accept Ho, Not Significant

Table 3 shows that there is no relationship between the respondents' self-assessment of their business writing skills against their level of business writing skills as the p-value shows .598 which is more than the level of the significance of 0.05. This data is indicative that the respondents' self-assessment has no impact in their level of business writing skills. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted. The absence of the relationship between the Office Assistants' self-assessment of their writing skills when correlated with their Business Writing Test scores



may be attributed to the several validity and reliability issues of the former. As worded by Coombe (2002), the reliability of the respondents' judgement of his/her skills is subject to variables (e.g., age, past academic record, and lack of training in self-assessment) which could influence the accuracy of the self-assessment. To help determine the consistency of the self-assessment, the respondents need to assess their performance on a regular basis and such performance must be carefully and closely linked with the skills that they are working on. The result of the negative relationship is an indication that the office assistants must be trained as well in doing self-evaluation to provide more accurate assessments. Considering Coombe's (2002) assertion that the frequency of doing self-assessment is also a factor in determining its reliability and validity, it must be noted that HCDC employees are only asked annually to assess themselves using the generic performance evaluation form.

Though a significant relationship has not been drawn between the two variables, it must be recognized that the overall mean of 2.98 garnered from the respondent's self-assessment is an indication that the respondents have acknowledged their lacking skills in business writing in terms of performing the listed 15 writing tasks. This result is congruent with their level in Business Writing Skill as measured vis-à-vis the six writing traits. In addition, Broad (2003) cited in the Grounded Theory that assessing writing skills should not be limited to the traditional approach, which is formulating rubrics, scoring essays, and writing reports. Hence, an SSI was conducted in order to extract a more accurate result on the writing skills of the respondents.

### **Business Writing Training Design/ Intervention Program**

After a thorough needs assessment via Business Writing Test (BWT), Training Needs Assessment (TNA) Survey Questionnaire, and Semi-Structured Interview (SSI), the findings revealed the developing level of the respondents' business writing skills in terms of word choice, sentence fluency and convention. In the same manner, thru the TNA, they assessed themselves in an emerging level in writing a strategic plan, in a developing level in proofreading and editing, writing a memorandum, a letter of complaint, a reply to a complaint and an incident report. Based on the said outcome, the researchers customized an intervention program. The proposed training program was bespoken to enhance the respondents' present level of writing skill in terms of Sentence Fluency, Word Choice and Conventions. The researchers designed the program using activity-based approach to training and learning for adults.

### **CONCLUSION**

Business writing skills is influenced by many factors. The demographic profile of the respondents against their level of business writing skills has no significant difference and contradicted the claims and contentions mentioned in the related studies and literatures. In other words, age, gender, educational attainment, and length of service are not determinants of the respondents' business writing skills. This also opens the possibility that there are factors such as but not limited to the quantity and quality of training that affects the office assistants' level of business writing skills. Furthermore, the respondents' level of self-assessment and level of business writing skills showed no relationship too. This means that whether or not the respondents' business writing skills increases, their self-confidence in performing business writing tasks will not be affected. This result was incoherent with the claims that when employees become confident with what they are doing, it would manifest in their outputs. The respondents demonstrated a much knowledgeable level on business letter writing which was contradictory to what the office heads feedback about their Office Assistants, i.e., their subordinates are lacking in knowledge when it comes to business writing thus lacking the skills thereof. The inconsistency may be because the office heads and the office assistants do not have the same level of standards and expectations when it comes to Business Writing, what maybe satisfactory to the office assistant may not be satisfactory to the Office Head. The result also entails that the though the office assistants possess a basic knowledge on the terminologies and other concepts on Business Writing their current level of knowledge seemed to be insufficient and unrecognized by their office heads because the respondents are still unable to fully extend assistance to the former in drafting correspondences and writing reports. The respondents' level of knowledge or familiarization on business letter writing was also inconsistent with their level of business writing skills. Their level of business writing skills is at the developing point which means that they know written communication but need a deeper understanding on business writing for although they could write business letters and other correspondences it lacks clarity and conciseness. The findings revealed that the current level of business writing knowledge of the office assistants should be upgraded through trainings where they could sharpen their writing skills by putting it into practice. The knowledge that they possess will remain dormant unless they will be regularly trained to write because it is the training and practical experience of writing business





correspondence that determine their being well-versed in making those. Even if the respondents' gained a graduate degree or they have been tenured for so many years, if they were not given an intensive business writing training, not assessed comprehensively, or not exposed to do so practically, then, they will not be that good in actual business writing.

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