

ERCE 2019

Regional Comparative & Explanatory Study 2019

Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Calidad de la Educación (LLECE)

**UNESCO's Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
(UNESCO OREALC, Santiago)**

**Writing test and
its implications for policy and
practice**

Basic info ERCE 2009

Participants: 16 countries of Latin America & the Caribbean
+ 4.000 schools
+ 160.000 students

Grades evaluated: 3rd grade (9 years old students)
6th grade (12 years old students)

Areas of evaluation: Reading
Writing
Math
Science (6th grade)

Importance of writing for literacy development

Writing is a central skill for human development

- It is a **learning** or **epistemic skill**.
- Its explicit teaching:
 - Helps students learn all school subjects
 - Creates knowledge in academic, work-and public spheres of life.
 - Has great impact in social development, since all activities in contemporary societies are mediated by written texts (whether in digital or physical form).
- With **its counterpart, reading**, are fundamental communicative competences for citizens to understand, participate, and contribute to society, and to improve their quality of life.

Writing is a central skill for school success

- It is a pillar of the subject **Language** in Latin American curricula, though in some countries teachers are less prepared to teach it than they are to teach reading.
- Writing practice in schools is scarce because it demands teachers' time, mastery of specific strategies and revision and feedback of students' texts. It happens because it is a complex skill, learned and developed progressively along a person's life, far beyond early literacy learning.
- It allows students to understand how language functions, to develop a **metalinguistic knowledge**.
- Current research stresses the importance of teaching writing at all school levels, from initial grades to higher education.

Writing is a complex skill

- It involves **cognitive, linguistic and motor processes** that compete among themselves during text production, demanding a substantial cognitive effort from students.
- Without enough teacher professional developments, school criteria to evaluate text construction and quality only scratch the surface, e.g. spelling and grammatical correction. They tend to overlook fundamental structural dimensions that promote deep writing learning, such as **text construction, coherence, cohesion, and organization of ideas**.
- It is urgent to pay attention to writing development, mainly among elementary school students.

- Writing includes two types of skills.
- **Transcription skills:** children's capacity to identify **sounds (fonemes)** and represent them with **letters (graphemes)**. These skills are acquired in the initial grades and are essential because, as children automatize these processes and achieve a fluid transcription of words, they can concentrate in the composition process.
- **Composition skills:** refer to text production and consider its different dimensions: **textual structure (genres), adaptation to the communicative situation, coherence, cohesion, vocabulary command, and grammar (morphology and syntax)**.
- Writing and learning of both.
- reading skills are correlated. Teaching one impacts positively on the other, because even though they are distinct language skills, they have **a common knowledge base** (e.g. **knowledge of phonology, spelling, vocabulary and genres**). So, the combined teaching of these two skills favors the

The Writing test in ERCE 2019 Methodology

Is based on the analysis of
the curricula of
participating countries

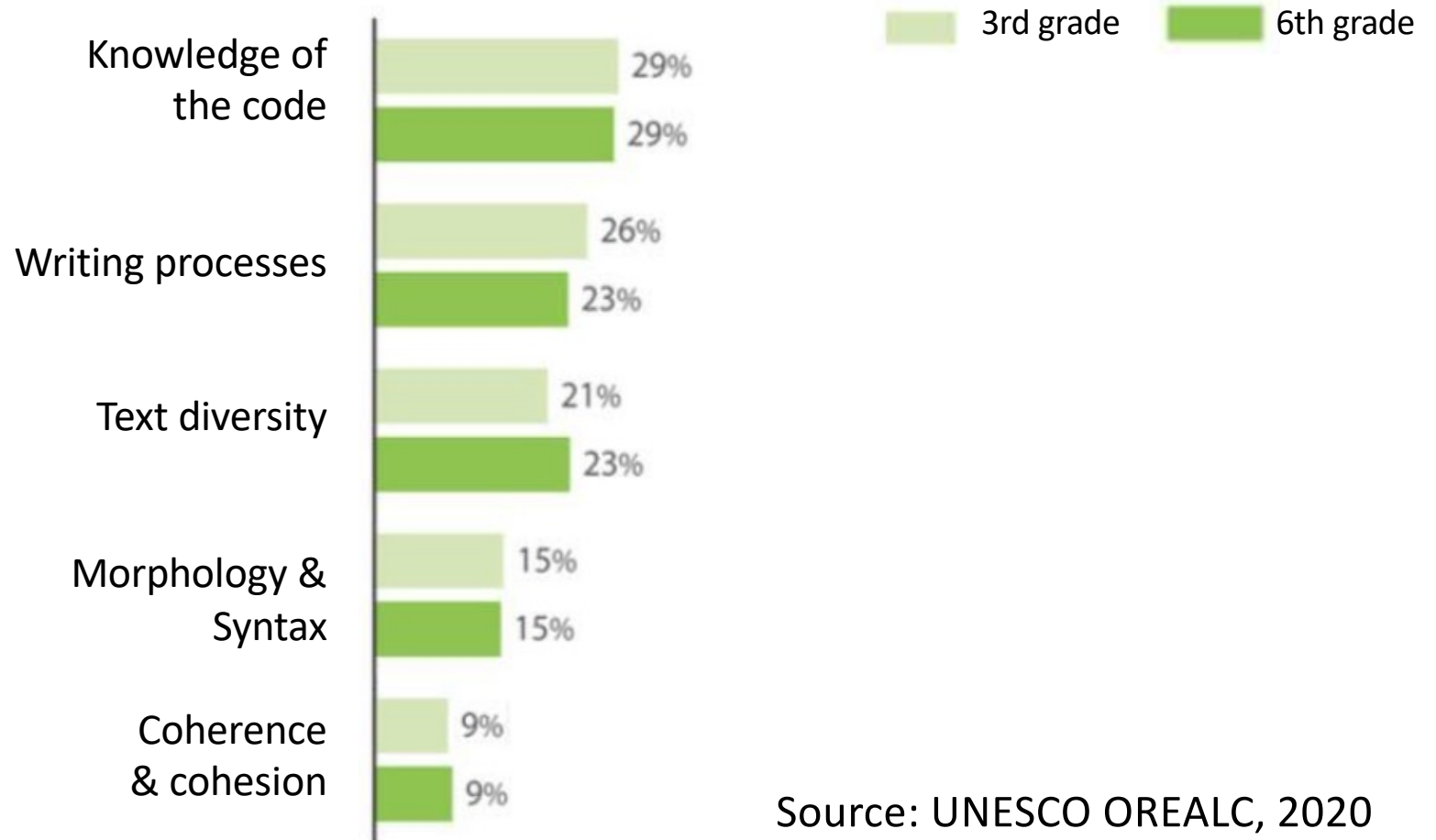
Presents communicative
situations that require
written communication

Writing
Evaluation

Considers writing a
multidimensional
ability

Describes performances
using rubrics

Writing contents identified by ERCE in the curricula of participant countries



Source: UNESCO OREALC, 2020

Domains evaluated by ERCE 2019

Domain	INDICATORS FOR 3rd GRADE	INDICATORS FOR 6th GRADE
Discourse	Purpose and adjustment to the instruction Text type	Purpose and adjustment to the instruction Genre Register
Text	Vocabulary Global coherence Grammatical agreement (gender & number) Cohesion	Vocabulary Global coherence Grammatical agreement (gender & number) Cohesion
Readability Conventions	Basic spelling: association phoneme-grapheme Punctuation	Basic spelling: association phoneme- grapheme Use of spelling rules Punctuation

Instructions 3rd grade

Below you will find a writing assignment. Read it carefully and then write your text in the space with lines.

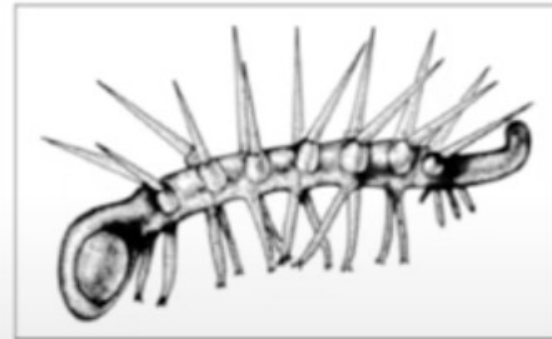
Imagine that you travel to an unknown place and something astonishing happens to you. Your best friend could not go with you and he/she asks you to tell about the trip.

Write a letter telling him/her what happened to you in that place.

Instructions 6th grade

Below you will find a writing assignment. Read it carefully and then write your text in the space with lines.

Your class is writing an *Encyclopedia of Non-existing Animals*, with illustrations of invented animals. Each animal must be introduced by an article including a brief description of its features, form of life, diet and other interesting information you can imagine so the Encyclopedia seems real even if it is not. You were assigned to write the article about the animal in the photograph.



Write an article describing this animal and presenting all the information you can invent for the *Encyclopedia of Non-existing Animals*.

Evaluation rubrics

One rubric for each indicator to be evaluated

Between grades, rubrics for the same indicator are not always identical. There are variations in terms of requirements and development of the evaluated ability

Rubrics
to
evaluate writing

Description of four categories of performance

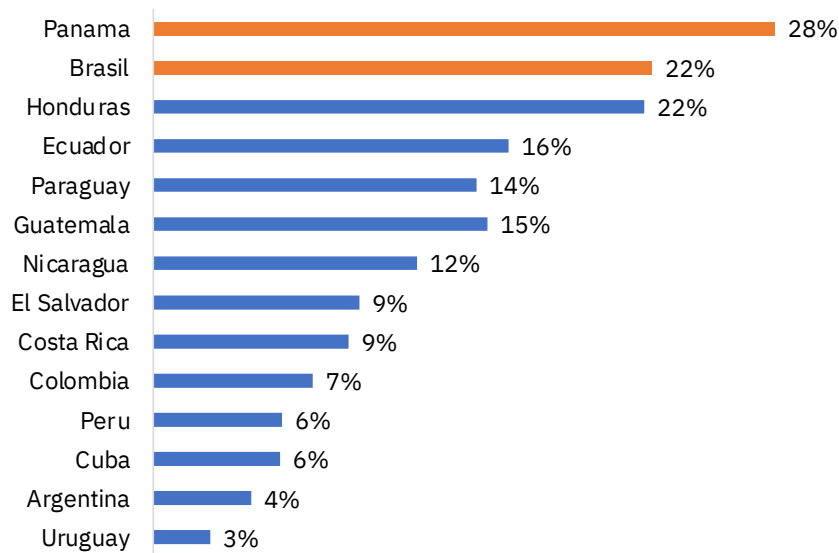
Rubrics should be considered in order to interpret the results presented in the report

An example of rubric: 3rd. Grade, Field: Discourse – Letter to a friend

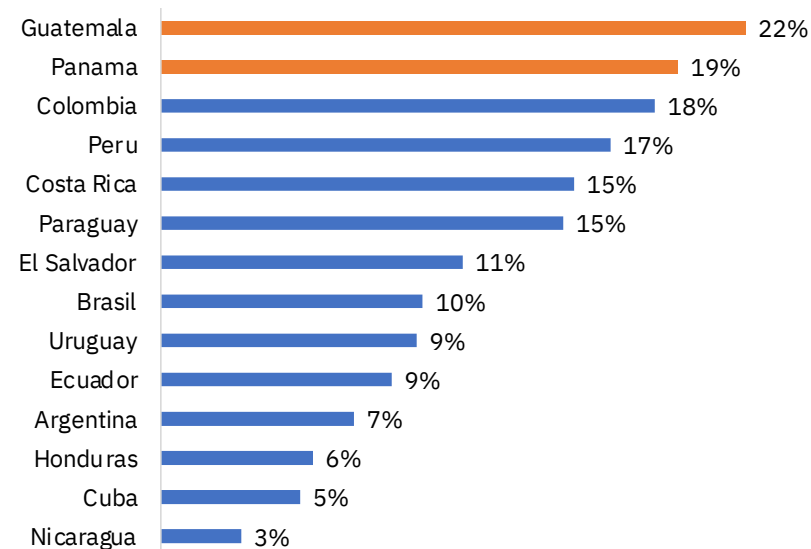
Indicator	4	3	2	1
<p>Purpose and observance of the instruction</p>	<p>The text recounts the situation requested, following a sequence where there is an initial situation, a central situation or development, and a final situation, regardless the order in which they are presented.</p>	<p>The text recounts a narrative sequence of at least two situations related between them, among which it is present the central situation requested.</p>	<p>The text only presents the central situation requested, which can be in the middle of a list, in a narration about another topic or isolated.</p>	<p>The text has a different purpose, tells a situation which is not the one requested or articulates another type of sequence (description, argumentation, etc.)</p>

Proportion of students in the **lowest performance categories** in the assessment of **Text domain**

Third grade



Sixth grade

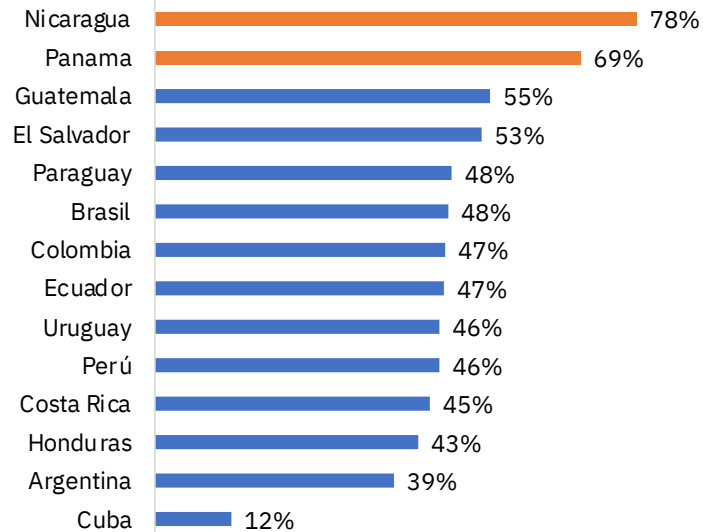


Note: The lowest performance categories include the average of students placed in categories 1 and 2, as assessed in the discursive domain. It also includes Vocabulary, Global Coherence, Cohesion and Agreement subdomains.

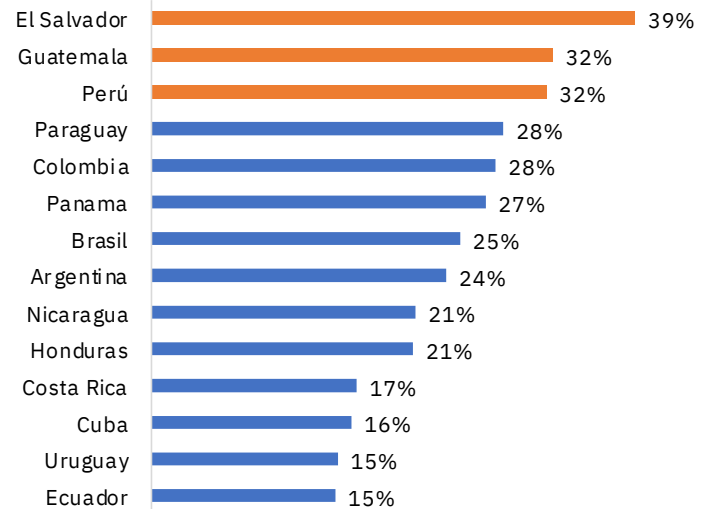
Source: Barquero, K. using ERCE 2019.

Proportion of students in the lowest performance categories in the assessment of **Discurso domain**

Third grade



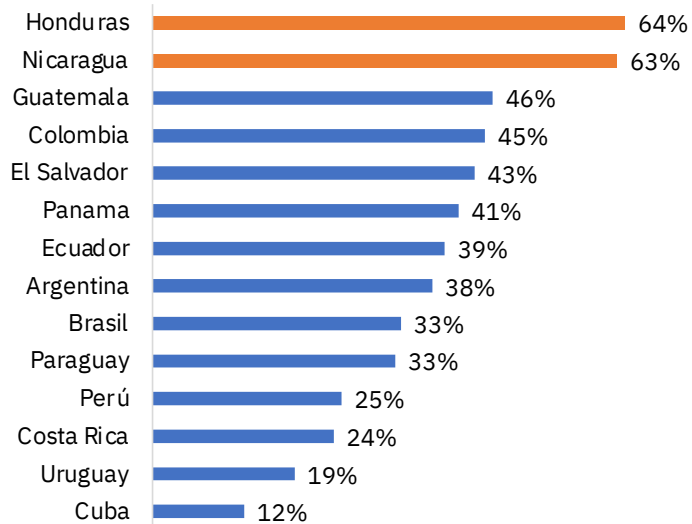
Sixth grade



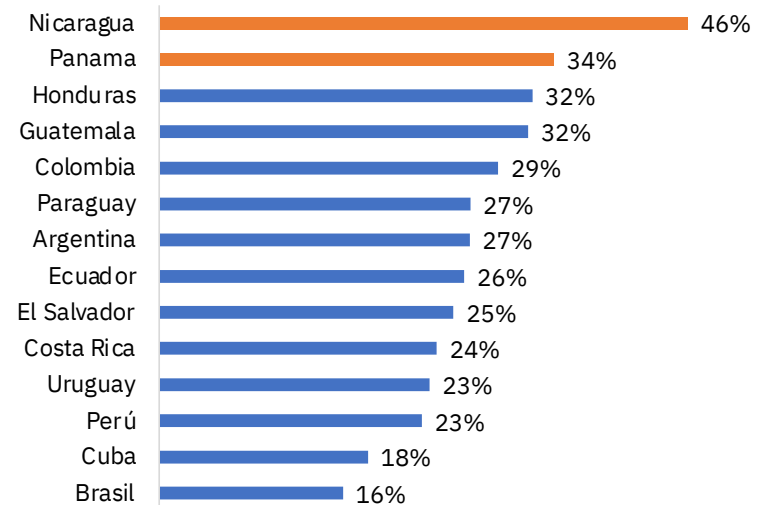
Note: The lowest performance categories include the average of students placed in categories 1 and 2, as assessed in the discursive domain. It also includes the Gender and Purpose of the Prompt subdomains.
Source: Barquero, K. using ERCE 2019.

Proportion of students in the lowest performance categories in the assessment of Readability Conventions domain

Third grade



Sixth grade



Note: The lowest performance categories include the average of students placed in categories 1 and 2, as assessed in the discursive domain. It also includes Initial Spelling and Punctuation subdomains.

Source: Barquero, K. using ERCE 2019.

Results and implications of students' performance in the test

- The writing study delivers its **results at the national level only**, without comparisons with the regional average or between countries. Such a comparison would have required a calibration study of the coding among countries to guarantee the same criteria were applied in all of them. It was not possible to do it in the initial year of the pandemic.
- In the average of Latin America & the Caribbean curricula, and in the average of the Central American ones, there is **a strong emphasis in the knowledge of the code** (one third of the mentions on average in the region), which points to the knowledge of the alphabetic system and of calligraphic, spelling and vocabulary aspects. This is important because they are basic aspects of written production.
- However, **coherence and cohesion are diminished in both 3rd and 6th grade curricula**, and this is more evident in Central American ones. It is necessary to put attention in this aspect, specially in 6th grade, since a **communicative approach to language** is writing for an audience and with a purpose, which requires coherent and cohesive written texts.

Results and implications of students' performance in the test

- In 3rd grade, **students' performance is better in the Text domain than in the Discourse domain**. In the Text domain, students write texts with a precise vocabulary, coherent, and with sentence agreement, but **there are multiple difficulties with cohesion** due to lack of referents or connectives. More difficulties are visible in the Discourse domain, with **problems to include genre features** in order to respond to the communicative purpose.
- In the Conventions of Readability domain, most students use some though not all punctuation marks, and make some spelling mistakes.
- In 6th grade, **performance is also better in the Text domain than in the Discourse domain**, but with smaller differences between them than in 3rd grade.
- In the Conventions of Readability domain there is better performance in the application of spelling norms than in 3rd grade, even though the majority of students makes some spelling mistakes.
- The ERCE Writing report concludes emphasizing some strategies to teach writing.

THANK YOU!