



**Newsletter of the Laboratory for
Assessment of the Quality in
Education (LLECE)**

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that we present this second edition of the newsletter of the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE), LLECE up-to-date. We have received many positive reactions to our first newsletter, which has motivated us to continue to offer you this publication as a means of informing you about the important work of LLECE.

July was a period of important changes for the Laboratory: firstly, a new Technical Assistant joined us and he will introduce himself in this newsletter. Secondly, we can now confirm that Ernesto Treviño has decided to join us as a Senior Advisor. Ernesto contributed to SERCE, and we are opening this month's issue with an interview with him.

Currently we are working on several topics, including sampling design, test item development, as well as the development of a framework for factors associated with learning achievement. Among our tasks, it is important to highlight the development of a strategic plan which we will discuss with the new High Level Technical Advisory Board (Spanish acronym: CTAN) at a meeting in September. Next month we will share more information about CTAN. We will keep you up-to-date.

Technical Coordination of LLECE
OREALC/UNESCO Santiago

Four questions for the Laboratory's new Senior Advisor Ernesto Treviño

Can you explain what your assignment for LLECE entails?

The assignment involves three parts: the first part is to study and better understand the results of the SERCE's study on factors associated with learning and, specifically, the construct of school climate, to draw lessons from SERCE to inform TERCE and its study of associated factors. The objective of the second part is, firstly, to conduct a literature review of associated factors pertaining to performance. In addition, I will devise a series of hypotheses with respect to variables that predict performance in Latin America, which are of central concern to the education systems and which TERCE should measure. Finally, I will revise the sampling strategy for this study.

Why should we be interested in "associated factors?"

Assessments of learning outcomes tell us how much students have learned, however, by themselves, they do not indicate with what types of factors learning is associated. Studies of associated factors concentrate on understanding what students learn and, starting from the discovery of these variables, the studies attempt to identify alternative forms of action and educational policy to



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improve academic performance, through interventions that transform the factors that are most related with learning achievement.

Why is it important to be able to rely on a solid sample in TERCE?

In comparative and evaluative educational studies, it is fundamental to estimate academic achievement in each nation with precision, in order to have a reliable study. Therefore, the sample must be representative of the educational reality in each nation and, for that reason, we should construct a sample design to account for the diverse realities of the national education systems. At the same time, the sample should be efficient meaning that it should capture the greatest variability of learning with the least amount of schools possible. Therefore, the sample design is of great importance for the study.

And, if you could give a recommendation to improve TERCE, what would it be?

TERCE represents a crucial opportunity to improve the measurement of associated factors given that, in the region, a culture of evaluation and development using standardised exams has formed. However, the contextual questionnaires that measure the associated factors still do not receive the same level of attention. TERCE presents an opportunity to conduct a more in-depth study of associated factors, with previously devised hypotheses, and the development of robust questionnaires and analysis.

Essay: The importance of writing evaluations

Fabio Jurado

Without a doubt the most important innovation of SERCE was the assessment of writing skills. It is very common in external tests to evaluate writing in a restrictive way, such as when they ask for sentence completion or insert a word in substitution of another. These types of assessment do not allow for the evaluation of the textuality that is implicit in the construction of messages and the identification of recipients. After several discussions within the SERCE teams about the challenges associated with large scale writing tests, LLECE approved the separation of the writing test from the reading test. Analyses of the findings were also conducted separately, considering writing as a fundamental experience in cognitive domains at school. This study contributes to the body of knowledge in this area by providing supplementary information about what reading tests are often unable to report.

The SERCE language assessment team, led by Ana Torresi, agreed to evaluate the writing portion, considering each step from the draft to the final text, according to given instructions. The instructions asked for a descriptive text; this is a central point: the evaluator, whether a language teacher, a science teacher, a math teacher or from another area, must be explicit in the kind of text they want the student to produce: is it a narrative text? a descriptive text? an explanatory text? an argumentative text? an instructive text? An in-depth study on the way instructions are given inside classrooms will be conducted. SERCE points out several of these arguments in the book: *Escritura. Un estudio de las habilidades de los estudiantes en América Latina y el Caribe** [only available in Spanish].



The relevance of the writing assessment is in the novelty of evaluating the production of a complete text; at the same time, shows the three steps involved in the process: one, the creation of a draft; two, a reflection on the construction of the draft and how to proceed according to instructions; three, the development of a final text. The evaluation sheet can assist in the design of workshops for teachers considering various aspects of the education process such as the curriculum, pedagogy and the assessment.

To what extent are teachers addressing the communicative element of writing in their teaching practice? Although this is mandated in many curricula, but only assessments can tell us to what extent this is actually being implemented. This is at the heart of the importance of assessing writing, understood as text production as a manifestation of culture.

*To read the entire article in Spanish click on this link: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001919/191925s.pdf>

A new face in the office: Technical Assistant Mauricio Holz



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**Tell us a little bit about yourself:
Where are you from?
Where did you study? Where did you work before joining the laboratory?**

My name is Mauricio Holz, I'm Chilean and I was born in Santiago in December, 1978. I

studied Economics at the Gabriela Mistral

University and Public Policy at the University of Chile. Before joining UNESCO, I worked for CEPAL as a consultant in the Development and Population division, focusing on themes related to inter-generational finance and social spending in a context where there are rapid demographic changes and its effects on the development of Latin American and Caribbean nations.

What will be your role in the Laboratory?

For the moment, in LLECE, I will be working within the framework of the second and third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Studies (in Spanish SERCE and TERCE).. I will be collaborating with and assisting national coordinators with the development of their work, to obtain a sample for TERCE. Also, together with a team of LLECE experts and other institutions, I will be conducting a statistical analysis of the results from the SERCE. Eventually, I will be supporting other areas of work under the framework of the Comparative and Explanatory Studies, and other projects that develop and carry out the work of the Laboratory in the areas of quality, equity and financing education.

What are you expectations while you are working in the Laboratory?

Working for LLECE, for me, is an excellent opportunity to collaborate on a project with high technical standards that will deliver results and fundamental conclusions for the improvement of relevant themes for the region, such as the quality of and equity in education in the Latin America and Caribbean region. In the same vein, my expectations are to contribute to the Laboratory by means of rigorous work, with high quality standards, to be able to improve education for students in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Progress towards a conceptualisation of the quality of education: Opening a regional discussion

Even though there is consensus that the issue of quality of education is of great importance to our region (as well as for the world, as it relates to Goal 6 of the Education for All agenda, EFA), it remains a concept of great complexity. There is an assumption that educational assessment captures quality of education. However, if one achieves good learning results at the cost of happiness of the learners, can we say the education has been ‘good’? If achievement in mathematics is high, but achievement in history or arts is not, can we really say that we are achieving a high quality of education? Moreover, if around half of the students achieve well but the other half does not, is that a problem? For all of these reasons, it is not that easy to define the concept of the quality of education, even though we do know that it is tightly linked with the concept of equity.

The clarification of this complex concept is the purpose of a key event, to take place at a regional level, which is jointly organised by UNESCO and UNICEF in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, between 20 and 22 September of this year. The name of this event is “A right to quality Education for All in Latin America and the Caribbean.” This event will unite experts in educational evaluation, academics and experts from international organisations, among others.

In this meeting, we will address the relationship between quality of education and equity, as well as the role of educational assessment at their intersection. The model of quality of education developed by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago will be the starting point of this debate. The document in which this is presented, published under the title [‘Educación de calidad para todos: un asunto de derechos humanos’](#), is based on the Buenos Aires Declaration (2007), where the Ministers of Education validated the concept of education as public good and a fundamental human right, defining quality of education by means of relevance, pertinence, equity, effectiveness and efficiency.

The invitation for this event was sent to all UNESCO and UNICEF member states in Latin America and the Caribbean addressed to their respective Ministers of Education. We hope to be able to count on the participation of all stakeholders and professionals working in assessment of the quality of education in the region and particularly of the National Coordinators of the member countries of LLECE.

If you are interested in participating in this event, please contact: m.copetta@unesco.org

Activities this month:

- Item development (continuing)
- Revision of framework for associated factors (continuing)
- Strategic Plan
- Meeting preparation for CTAN
- Revision of sampling manuals

The following is a translation of a fragment from the document: Tawil, S., Akkari, A., & Macedo, B. (Forthcoming). *Beyond the Conceptual Maze: The Notion of the Quality of Education*. ERF Discussion Paper UNESCO Education, Research and Foresight. No. 2, p. 15.

The UNESCO Santiago model

The 2007 UNESCO Santiago model proposes five dimensions of the quality of education that attempt to capture the perspectives of the various educational stakeholders concerned and the social action that they are engaged in at the local level. In addition to the dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency and equity that characterize an educational system, the model stresses the dimension of relevance which is analyzed at two distinct levels: (i) relevance of the educational system in responding appropriately to collective societal concerns, and (ii) relevance (or “pertinence”) to the daily conditions of individual learners, their families and communities. The five dimensions of this model are defined in the following manner:

The five dimensions of the quality of education

Relevance	Need for educational experiences to guarantee the kinds of learning that truly prepare people for modern life, and in line with the vision of four pillars of learning as proposed by the UNESCO (2006) “Delors Report”.
Pertinence	Flexibility of the educational experiences so that they can adjust to the particular conditions of individuals, can value diversity, and can provide venues for participation.
Equity	The extent to which the universal right to education is effective for all in view of the creation of more just societies.
Effectiveness	The extent to which public action is effective in expanding access to basic education (comprehensive early childhood care and education; universal completion of primary education; ensuring student learning achievement).
Efficiency	The extent to which public services are efficient in the use of resources for the delivery of education as a public good.

This newsletter is a monthly publication of the Technical Coordination of LLECE, which is coordinated by the Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC) / UNESCO Santiago.

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