

## UNESCO warns of the need for greater presence of concepts such as knowledge of the world, climate change and gender equality in the Latin America and the Caribbean's curricula

- A study by UNESCO's Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) analyzed the curricula of 19 Latin American countries. The report provides information on what countries expect their students to learn in the areas of Language, Mathematics and Natural Sciences in third and sixth grades.
- Through this research, UNESCO explores for the first time the presence of central concepts for 2030 Education Agenda, such as global citizenship education and education for sustainable development in Latin American curricula.

**Santiago, July 28, 2020** - The report "*¿Qué se espera que aprendan los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe? Análisis curricular del Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (ERCE 2019)*, (*What are students in Latin America and the Caribbean expected to learn? Curriculum Analysis of the Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE 2019)*), was released by the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago), through its Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE).

This curriculum analysis is part of the ERCE 2019 study, a large-scale research study assessing the learning achievements of students in Latin America and the Caribbean, the results of which will be available in mid 2021.

UNESCO's research, which was supported by UNICEF and with the technical participation of Universidad de Chile's Center for Advanced Research in Education (CIAE), focused on the **analysis of the curriculum content of 3rd and 6th grades of primary school** in 19 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The **Director of the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago), Claudia Uribe**, explained that this study was carried out to learn about the contents and competencies prioritized by the different countries of the region and to highlight the visions and curricular trends at the time prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. "These are inputs that UNESCO makes available so that **each country may review its national curriculum**

**from a comparative perspective** and assess how it responds to what students need to learn in order to develop academically and socio-emotionally as citizens of the 21st century, in an increasingly diverse society, as proposed by the 2030 Education Agenda".

Among the findings, the report highlights in the area of Reading the relevance of working with a diversity of texts and the emphasis on literal and inferential reading comprehension, as well as reading strategies for comprehension, such as monitoring or re-reading. The report also points out a lesser presence of concepts linked to the areas of *Decoding and Reflection and Evaluation* on texts, which is especially relevant in these times due to the consumption of different quality contents by children on the Internet.

Another novelty contained in this report is the **regional analysis of the presence of content on global citizenship education and education for sustainable development**, which inclusion in curricula is central to progress towards the fulfillment of the 2030 Education Agenda, in particular its target 4.7. "With the findings of this study, the countries will be able to review their actions to support teachers in implementing the curriculum with a view to student learning, even more in complex contexts such as the current one, where prioritizing content is essential", said **Carlos Henríquez, General Coordinator of the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE)**.

#### **Main results in the disciplinary areas**

In its disciplinary aspect, the analysis involved the revision and systematization of official curriculum documents in force until 2017 for the areas of Language, Mathematics and Natural Sciences. This information was provided by the countries participating in this stage of the ERCE 2019 study.

In the area of **Language**, one of the most outstanding aspects in the region is the **predominance of a communicative approach**, focused on the use of language in different contexts. In **Reading**, there is a strong emphasis on *Textual Diversity*, which implies the reading of diverse types of texts and genres with which students relate in their daily lives. Likewise, the work on *Literal and Inferential Comprehension* and *Reading Strategies* is highlighted, for being very relevant for classroom work, since this is a learning problem affecting a significant proportion of children in the region.

However, the presence of *Reflection and Assessment* on texts is less present, an indispensable skill in these times for the development of critical thinking and citizenship. This skill is a priority because people are increasingly exposed to texts of varying quality or to content with inaccurate or biased information, especially on the Internet. Reflecting on texts is indispensable for being well informed and participating in the 21st century societies.

In the case of **Writing**, the presence of *Knowledge about the Code and Processes Involved in Writing* stands out. Knowing the written code implies understanding the alphabetic system, as

well as the orthographic system and some relationships of meaning between words, all of them basic knowledge for the written production. Similarly, the presence of the *Processes Involved in Writing* (such as planning, writing, reviewing and rewriting) underline the importance of paying attention to the process and not only to the written product. This curricular emphasis is supported by evidence showing that teaching writing as a process contributes to the learning and improvement of this skill at school level.

In **Mathematics**, the central finding is that most curricula adhere to the *Problem Solving* approach as a fundamental element in teaching and learning Mathematics to cope with the unforeseen circumstances and challenges of everyday life. According to the country, this approach is presented either as content or as a transversal skill expressed in different domains or topics present in the curricula analyzed, such as *Numbers and Operations, Geometry, Magnitudes and Measurements, Statistics and Probability, and Patterns and Algebra*.

In **Science**, there is an emphasis on the *Scientific Literacy* approach in a significant number of the curricula analyzed. This implies going beyond the transmission of scientific knowledge, since it seeks to enable people to explain and predict the phenomena of nature. Its purpose is the development of abilities for citizen participation in decision-making that involves the interrelationship between science, technology, and society.

The following curricular subjects were found in most countries: *Human Body and Health, the Earth and the Universe, Science, Technology and Society, Living Beings, Ecology and Environment, Matter and Energy*, this reflecting a relationship of science with real and unavoidable problems, such as sustainable development or the balance between technology and the well-being of people.

### **Other novel findings for global challenges**

As an innovation, this report analyzed the presence of concepts related to **global citizenship education** and **education for sustainable development** in the region's curriculum documents. Both educational components are central to developing in students the skills, attitudes, and behaviors that will train them to respond to the changing and urgent global challenges demanded by all countries today.

The study reviewed the presence of concepts in national education curricula and sought to distinguish whether these concepts appear in a declarative manner, as guiding principles, or whether they are integrated in a programmatic manner into those sections of the curriculum that are most frequently consulted by teachers when preparing their classes and, therefore, are more clearly integrated into teaching.

In the areas of global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, the report found a greater presence of concepts in the declarative sections of the curriculum documents. Noteworthy, mentions of these concepts appear to a lesser extent in the programmatic

documents of the curriculum, that is, in the material that guides and supports the implementation of these topics in the classroom.

In the case of **global citizenship education**, it was observed that the notions of *Citizenship, Identity, Respect, and Diversity* are found in all of the countries studied. This is interesting because they belong to different dimensions of learning relevant to the exercise of citizenship, which are addressed in a broad way.

However, the report points out that the concepts that are present in less than half of the countries in the region are *Brotherhood, Happiness, Knowledge of the World and Empathy*. These are very relevant notions that are absent in several countries, being a concern since they help to address one of the main challenges of globalization, heightened by the pandemic: how to live together.

"It is important to join forces in order to strengthen comprehensive education in the region, and these concepts are a fundamental part of its consolidation. Schools are one of the main agents of socialization, and for this reason opportunities must be guaranteed in the curriculum to develop integrating behaviors, such as recognizing diversity, acquiring values such as empathy and brotherhood, and learning about global problems", said **Carlos Henríquez, General Coordinator of the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) at OREALC/UNESCO Santiago**.

Other key concepts such as *Gender Equality and Freedom* appear in only half of the countries. UNESCO considers it relevant that education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean continue to make efforts towards greater integration of these subjects into national curricula and that they consider them in their processes of reflection, redesign, and implementation of curricula and education policies.

Moreover, in countries where *Gender Equality* appears, it is generally addressed in the guiding sections of curricula, and not as a programmatic content. Progress in this area is crucial in order for societies to develop in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

With respect to **education for sustainable development**, the concepts of *Environment and Sustainability* are present in the curriculum documents of all countries. However, concepts such as *Recycle, reduce, reuse; Imagining future hypotheses; Understanding complex systems; Natural environment; Economy; Sustainable (green) processes and Carbon* appear in less than half of the curricula analyzed. Mentions of *Climate Change and Critical Thinking* tend to appear only at a declarative level, without being intentionally integrated into classroom action.

UNESCO and its Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) have opened the disaggregated information of "*¿Qué se espera que aprendan los estudiantes de América Latina y el Caribe? Análisis curricular del Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo (ERCE*

2019) on its new [web data platform](#), where this information is available to experts, public policy makers, teachers and all audiences interested in these findings.

**More information:**

- All the information available on this launch is available at <https://es.unesco.org/news/entrega-resultados-del-analisis-curricular-ERCE2019>