



**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY  
OF SANTIAGO DE GUAYAQUIL**

**OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN  
TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

**TITLE**

**ENHANCING TEACHING PERFORMANCE THROUGH THE  
ADAPTATION OF WRITING TASKS IN THE OFFICIAL TEXTBOOK  
FOR SECOND BACCALAUREATE LEARNERS AT "NUEVE DE  
OCTUBRE" SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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**CERTIFICATION**

We certify that this research project was presented by **González Sarmiento Margarita Mariuxi** and **Luna Lara Eduardo Marcelo**, as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Degree of Master in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**.

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**We, Margarita Mariuxi González Sarmiento and Eduardo Marcelo Luna  
Lara,**

**HEREBY DECLARE THAT:**

The Research Project: **Enhancing Teaching Performance Through the Adaptation of Writing Tasks in the Official Textbook for Second Baccalaureate Learners at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School** has been developed based on thorough investigation, respecting the intellectual property rights of third parties regarding citations within the corresponding pages whose sources are included in the bibliography. Consequently, this work is of our full responsibility.

Under this statement, we are responsible for the content, truthfulness and scientific scope of the aforementioned paper.

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Authorize the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil to **publish** this Research Project: **Enhancing Teaching Performance Through the Adaptation of Writing Tasks in the Official Textbook for Second Baccalaureate Learners at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School** in the institutional repository. The contents, ideas and criteria in this paper are of our full responsibility and authorship.

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To Margarita, an incomparable classmate and soul mate who taught me how sacrifice gives the sweetest fruit.

With all my love,

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I dedicate this thesis to Eduardo, my dear uncle Gerardo and all my beloved family. Without their patience, understanding, and support, the completion of this work would not have been possible.

With love,

Margarita



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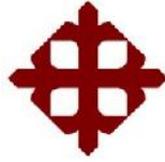
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**Sara Inés Rivadeneira Enríquez, M.  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BGU</b>	Bachillerato General Unificado
<b>CEFR</b>	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<b>CLIL</b>	Content Language Integrated Learning
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>EGB</b>	Educación General Básica
<b>ICT's</b>	Information Communication Technology
<b>L1</b>	First Language
<b>L2</b>	Second Language
<b>MINEDUC</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>TESOL</b>	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the teaching performance of English educators at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School regarding the usage of the official textbook when teaching writing to Second Bacculaureate learners. Likewise, this study aimed to evaluate the content and textbook approach that guide the development of writing skills in order to adapt the EFL instruction effectively.

This study was conducted through action research. Thus, the first part starts with a literature revision, which provides findings about the Nature of Writing, Writing Approaches, and Principles for Teaching Writing. Furthermore, aspects such as Teacher Professional Development and Effective Strategies for Improving Writing Skills are mentioned. Moreover, relevant facts about how to create an environment conducive for EFL Writers, the role of the teacher when teaching writing in the Ecuadorian curriculum, advantages and disadvantages of using textbooks, and writing tasks in the English textbook B1.1 Student’s Book are also mentioned. The data for this study were collected through questionnaires, surveys, and observation checklists. The information was gathered from the textbook of Second Year of Bacculaureate, and from 250 students and 12 teachers of the educational institution above mentioned. Then, the data were analyzed both, quantitatively and qualitatively. After the analysis, it was concluded that the writing tasks developed in class needed improvement. Accordingly, in pursuit of this goal, a proposal was elaborated. It consists on elaborating an accompanying booklet that provides writing activities and tasks based on the local context and the needs of learners, to further hold teachers’ training sessions that induce their reflection and assist them to visualize clear writing objectives.

**Key words:** Teaching performance, writing, conducive environment, textbooks, booklet.

## INTRODUCTION

To Suleiman (2000), “writing is a central element of language, any reading and language arts program must consider the multidimensional nature of writing in instructional practices, assessment procedures, and language development.” (p.155). Indeed, writing is a language skill that presents deep contrasts, on one hand, learning how to write correctly is not categorized as a crucial need; on the other hand, people may not be aware that modern life needs make people write constantly.

Burke (2017) posits that billions of text messages are sent in a single day through mobile device apps or social web platforms. Yet, such extreme abundance of written production is not raising the awareness to write proficiently or using formal conventions. As it could be expected, informality in written communication is not welcomed in the academic and professional fields. Instead, the use of a concise and straightforward style serves to transmit concepts with accuracy in labor and classroom environments. Tarone (2005) acknowledges that English learners’ primary purpose to study and learn English is academic and professional; they need to gain access into international academic and professional discourse communities. Interestingly, the standards of quality in writing demanded in the aforementioned fields are high. For this reason, the concern regarding teaching writing in EFL should include the use of agreed parameters of feedback, pertinent rubrics and topics relevant to learners. Evidently, opportunities to outstand as proficient user of a second language are diminished when the actors in the educational system are not fully committed to comply with the agreed purposes for teaching-learning English as a foreign language.

Despite the relevance of writing, assessment data compiled by Santangelo & Olinghouse (2009), indicate that teachers of writing do not obtain conclusive results at helping learners acquire the critical knowledge and skills needed for knowledgeable, expository, and convincing narrative prose.

In the case of Ecuador, Kamhi-Stein, Diaz Maglioli, & de Oliveira (2017), report that in the year 2015, 4,500 teachers of English were evaluated with a standardized exam. The results indicated that only two percent of them reached a B2 level. Therefore, the large majority of educators would not be

qualified to instruct learners in basic skills of L2, even worse in a productive skill like writing.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The problem emerged from the performance of the English educators regarding the teaching of writing, leading to unsatisfactory performance of the students when they are required to produce a piece of writing. Since writing is a productive skill to cultivate in the pupils, most educators forfeit opportunities to develop or enhance it. This issue was perceived along the school year 2017-2018 at “Colegio de Bachillerato Nueve de Octubre”, with the learners of Second Year of Baccalaureate, among whom, after an observation checklist in their textbooks. Additionally, several difficulties in their linguistic proficiency were detected, ranging from command over grammar, syntax and vocabulary to a lack of ideas, reliance on their first language and weak structure organization.

At this point, teaching strategies for fostering writing and subsequent appropriate techniques were needed to stimulate students in the process of writing. The problem was evident through the analysis of the textbook where the writing tasks were disregarded most of the times. In addition, some writing tasks suggested by the official textbook such as writing an article, a comparison and contrast essay, drafting a biography, or a brochure, among others, correspond to a B1.1 level; however, the pupils do not evidence such level, as a result, they experience demotivation.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

This study is significant in several aspects. Firstly, it intends to improve the teaching-learning approach as well as the engagement and activation process for writing skills through the design and compilation of complementary activities entailed to the writing tasks described in the official English textbook for Second Bacculaureate students at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School, allowing learners to develop and/or strengthen their writing skills. As Cunnigsworth (1995), states, textbook analysis aims to find plenty of opportunities and familiar situations for the learners to practice the language they are learning within a language generative framework. Consequently, learners at “Colegio de Bachillerato Nueve de Octubre” are expected to develop their writing skills with the final goal of communicating with others proficiently. In addition, the present study aims to supply a noteworthy contribution for both educators and learners. In the case of educators, the findings from the present research are to provide innovative strategies to have students writing with confidence in L2. Meanwhile, for the students, they would observe a scene variation in their learning activities that help them improve their EFL writing skills.

Finally, the implementation of this study will offer the community of learners at “Nueve de Octubre” High School a novel paradigm to use the learning material developed and prescribed by the Ministry of Education innovatively.

### **General Objective**

To appraise the teaching writing performance of EFL educators through the assessment of the level of completion of textbook writing tasks in order to enhance methodological strategies that foster second bacculaureate learners writing skills.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To assess the completion of textbook written activities to determine the presence of shortcomings in the teaching-learning writing process.
- To appraise the teaching writing strategies to develop a conducive environment for second bacculaureate writers.

- To determine the contribution of the educators' training sessions and an accompanying booklet on the development of second baccalaureate students' writing skills.

### **General Research Question**

- To what extent do the teaching writing performance and the completion of textbook written activities influence the development of second baccalaureate learners writing skills at "Nueve de Octubre" secondary school?

### **Specific Research Questions**

- Do the teaching writing performance and the completion of textbook written activities determine the presence of shortcomings in the teaching-learning writing process?
- In what respect can the appraisal of teaching writing strategies lead to the development of a conducive environment for second baccalaureate writers?
- To what extent do educators' training sessions and the elaboration of an accompanying booklet contribute to the development of second baccalaureate students' writing skills?

## OVERVIEW OF ENQUIRY

The section hereby will provide a brief summary of each chapter of the study, presenting a relevant overview. Thus, the Literature Review section starts introducing a background of the study. Then, relevant aspects related to teaching writing such as the nature of writing; writing approaches; teaching writing in EFL classes; and principles for teaching writing are conceptualized. In addition, this section will detail valuable information regarding teachers' professional development, emphasizing how teacher training is positioned in an institution. Moreover, it examines aspects that include professional teaching standards in the Ecuadorian Curriculum; effective strategies for improving writing skills; issues on teaching and learning writing in EFL classrooms, writing as a curricular thread of the EFL curriculum and assessment for writing. Finally yet vitally, significant insights regarding textbooks to study English as a foreign language, advantages and disadvantages of using them in the classroom setting, and appropriate approaches of Textbooks used in Public High Schools in Ecuador, as well as writing tasks included in the book B1.1 used by second baccalaureate learners are explored.

Regarding methodological framework, considerable aspects that tell about mixed methods research, participants, qualitative and quantitative methods, data collection techniques instruments, and the process of collecting data and research ethics are emphasized.

On the other hand, the data analysis will depict a clear inquiry about the problem of the study. Moreover, the graphs and tables will illustrate the results obtained from the instruments. Furthermore, a sample of second baccalaureate textbooks will be carefully examined to verify the completion of writing tasks. Certainly, this information will contribute greatly to simplify the objective of this research. After having analyzed the data, a purposeful solution to enhance teaching writing performance of educators at "Colegio de Bachillerato Nueve de Octubre" that will support learners to develop their writing skills will be planned, with the organization of training sessions addressed to educators and an accompanying booklet that includes innovative writing activities to be adapted during the writing instruction. Similarly, the proposal will include an introduction, current situation, scientific basis

regarding teaching writing performance, a brief description of the institution involved in the study, learners, who will benefit from such initiative, and significant perceptions regarding the booklet content. Likewise, a schedule with topics and activities to be covered in the teachers training sessions will be combined in this section.

To conclude, a well-developed conclusion based on the results attained from data analysis will be specified. Referring to the recommendation, it will assert key considerations to solve the issues found along the research.

# CHAPTER I

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Modern society demands people to express themselves through writing in order to interact effectively in the academic and professional fields. Accordingly, Grabe & Kaplan (2014) claim that the majority of key everyday tasks require of one to know how to read extensively and write consistently. Nowadays, written communications can be sent farther and faster than other types of communication, added to the multiple physical and technological resources used by writers, most of the world's population are reached and contacted by means of written texts.

Pei (1949) observes that the art of writing dates back to thousands of years, and it is still a priority to active members of a society; however, the teaching of writing became an extended concern only less than a century ago. During the initial stages of teaching writing, the premise for assessment was the number of grammar and spelling mistakes; another point of interest to grade was the organization and content of the written assignment. Basically, the rules of writing were confined to work with form over function.

Moreover, White & Arndt (1991) expressed their concern about the neglected role of writing as a part of language programs, despite its undeniable power as a permanent record, expressionist potential and as a formidable means of communication. In this regard, Hedge (2005) reported that such apathy towards teaching writing is still affecting assistance in the learning of new structures or vocabulary at sentence level used by teachers to monitor and diagnose problems of learners. Hence, Stein, Dixon, & Isaacson, as cited in Defazio, Jones , Tennant, & Hook (2010), assume that “many writing disabilities may derive from too little time allocated to writing instruction or from writing instruction inadequately designed around the learning needs of many students” (p.35). Thereupon, students hardly ever bother to develop their imaginative or creative skills and dedicate their time to using similar models and patterns in their own pieces of work and prove they have mastered some grammar rule, rather than having had a good idea on the subject matter.

Nunan (2003) reports the change observed during the decade of the seventies with the appearance of grammar courses disguised as writing classes where students usually copied sentences or short pieces of discourse trying to insert minor changes.

With time, educators started to become aware of the advantages and flaws of different writing teaching methods such as controlled writing, defined by Raimes (1983) as:

“A great deal of the content and/or form is supplied. It is the opposite of free writing, where students generate, organize, and express their own ideas, in their own sentences. In controlled tasks, more is given to the students: an outline to complete, a paragraph to manipulate, a model to follow, or a passage to continue” (p.95).

Subsequently, Reid (2001), reported a shift from strictly controlled writing to guided writing, a method still limited to structuring sentences aimed at responding questions or combining sentences.

In the words of Hartanti (2011), guided writing is useful for a wide range of teaching purposes; its advantages include the consideration of audience by writing pupils, the purpose, topic, selection of text type, at the moment of planning their writing. This way, writers can focus on conventions such as spelling, punctuation, standard usage, and handwriting. Subsequently, changes came slowly when language-based writing classes were replaced by the study of composition techniques that made teachers realize the needs of L2 learners as well as the role of writing in post-secondary institutions. The theoretical shift was present in the textbooks, which had instruction to teach organization patterns common in English academic prose, topic and thesis sentences, paragraph and essays, which focused primarily on the product. It is necessary to mention that this current approach is still widely used. The decade of the eighties saw the writing approach moving forward to an expressivity scheme that encouraged writing lessons to focus on self-discovery so that writers could express their feelings with confidence. This transformational paradigm was identified by Zamel (1982), who stated her thesis of the false dichotomy between process and product in L2 literature. Under this division, process aligned teachers stimulated and rewarded their students when they used their internal resources and individuality in a “writer

based” approach. Added to this, external audiences were excluded and fluency was favored over accuracy. On the other hand, product-aligned teachers were entirely concentrated on the accuracy, linguistic patterns and rhetorical discourse in a “reader based” approach directing the efforts to the satisfaction of an academic audience that showed no interest in creativity. With time, writing classes have left aside radical positions in the phenomenon described by Hairston (1982) as a “paradigm shift” aiming to achieve a rather more balanced understanding of composition theory, based on the contribution of authors like Murray (1972), who clarified that writing instructors are not supposed to teach a product but a process. This way, new pedagogical approaches have arisen to displace traditional “teacher-centered” approaches towards a “student-centered” posture. New concerns become known: classroom community and student responsibility by means of peer interactivity, which gives place to an author-reader interaction. In consideration of the aforementioned changes, teachers are designing curricula aiming to balance the needs of the institution, the programme and the students without dogmatic constrictions of any type.

## **1.2. The Nature of Writing**

Bachani (2003), describes writing as the ability to convey thoughts, opinions or pieces of news into a symbol system. In this regard, Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2005) categorize writing as a productive skill, which, unlike speaking, leaves a rather permanent evidence of the messages transmitted. For instance, the Dead Sea scrolls are still an object of interest after over two thousand years.

The role of writing among the language skills is enhanced due to its unique nature and characteristics. In addition, Bachani (2011), differentiates writing from speaking pointing at the fact that oral communication is generally used in a face-to-face interaction, meanwhile writers express ideas and communicate with readers either synchronously or in different space or time settings. Beyond the basic notions of writing, Grabe & Kaplan (2014) state that writing can be subdivided into a type of writing that involves composing and writing that does not. In the first case, writing connected to composing has an academic purpose, e.g. journals, proposals or essays are framed within this category, while the second category is limited to listing, informing or unidirectional

communication. By the same token, composing requires the combination of structural sentence units into a single and interconnected structure. Despite the simplicity of the explanation, several aspects have to be considered when teaching writing in a foreign language. Firstly, the interference of L1 in the target language mentioned by Kaplan (1966), who differentiates the patterns of discourse in several families of languages and observes the linear or straight to the point pattern of the English language. Meanwhile, Asian languages generally revolve or deliberate before focusing on the central idea, and something similar occurs with Romance or Slavic languages, which tend to digress periodically before routing to the central idea. In view of the foregoing, EFL writing instruction demands learners to modify their train of thoughts when structuring paragraphs, leaving behind what they knew and applying new direct mindsets for writing in accordance to English standards.

For a general purpose of analysis, Brown (1994) lists seven characteristics that outline the singularity of written production. To start, permanence, because a written piece can be read and reread multiple times. Then, production, which refers to the amount of planning and decision-making prior to producing. Next, distance in place or time, a term that practically does not interfere with the effectiveness of the message. After that, orthography, a rather limited feature of the writing process at the moment of giving information. To continue, complexity, an advantage of writing due to the countless combinations of clauses, subordinators or coordinators. The following, extended vocabulary, which due to the nature of writing, supports the posture that selecting terms from a wide set of options is a choice that most writers consider, and last but not least, formality, a social requirement exposed by Newman (1996) as a parameter of correctness and appropriate style. It is imperative to emphasize that writing is a skill entirely acquired under guided tutoring and practice; therefore, modern times require the use of ICT in order to work at the same pace of modern society. In brief, writing is a productive skill that should be learnt and mastered by English learners in consideration of thinking, drafting, and revising processes, resorting to technological aids if necessary.

### **1.3. Writing Approaches**

White (1989) cites three views concerning the nature of writing, and they are described as follows: the product approach, where the teacher focuses on the result of the composing act. For instance, a letter, email, essay, story or other, and learners are asked to comply with the parameters of grammar, discourse conventions and supporting details; the second is known as the process approach, which, according to Italo (1999), points at the act of composing as a set of stages where the writer refines, develops and transforms along the exercise. Unlike the two previous approaches, the communicative approach focuses on the purpose and audience of writing, in the opinion of Hailemariam (2012), its main purpose is to prepare learners to transmit ideas effectively as well as to perform different communicative tasks with proficiency. Another approach, which deserves to be mentioned, is the genre approach, which, in the words of Swales (1990), consists of a set of communicative events whose participants share communicative goals and have common purposes.

#### **1.3.1. The Product Approach**

More than an approach, to writing teachers, the product is seen as the outcome in teaching-learning EFL writing. Namely, a traditional scheme closely associated to the audio-lingual method, widely popular in the middle of the twentieth century. Silva (1990), considered the Product Approach as a way to highlight form and syntax with an emphasis on rhetorical drills, which merely contributed to the extended rehearse of grammar and vocabulary through working with meaningless pieces of writing. The main objective of this approach is the correctness of final written products. As Brown (1994) asserts, when composing their assignments, three main requirements must be complied: certain standards of English rhetorical style have to be met; accurate grammar has to be reflected and, the product has to be organized in conformity with what the audience would consider conventional. With regard to writing activities, Badger & White (2000) posit that there are four stages of learning writing, which have to be performed by writing students pursuant to this approach: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing. The first item deals with the effort to make students aware of certain features of a particular text; the second and third items are oriented to having students

practice their skills until the moment they are prepared for free production activities.

### **Limitations**

Despite all the advantages and history of the product approach, scholars have also detected inconveniences along its implementation. To start, one of the premises of the product approach relies on the improvement of writing based on grammar rules and proper vocabulary usage, which, in the opinion of Hyland (2003), presents up to four weak points when working towards obtaining a final product. The second problem is that “formal patterns” presented to students are based on subjective judgment of course-writers but not based on an analysis of authentic texts. Evidently, such situation may mislead learners when deciding what topics to write about. This is because written texts are made in response to a particular context, and there is no “universal” standard to judge upon the high or low quality of a context. In addition, meaning can be an issue in the sense that accuracy and usage are requested putting aside the communicative content. To conclude, a problem seen with students of writing is the difficulty to think of a topic and later express the goals and course to write about it. As Tickoo (2003) sustains, learners are denied the opportunity to self-express.

### **1.3.2. The Genre Approach**

In Literature, genre is a distinctive category of artistic composition; likewise, the genre approach exhibits different possibilities to draft a composition ranging from nursing notes, care plans, personal or business letters, research proposals, doctoral narratives, research article publications, textbooks and summaries. In EFL, writing genre is an approach defined by Martin J. R. (1992), as a goal-oriented, staged social process that promotes collaborative skills and strengthens the confidence of initiates in writing. Besides, Widodo (2006) affirms that, through group interaction, students get used to presenting their work to specific audiences with a certain purpose. A relevant analogy is presented by Kay & Dudley-Evans (1998), who find that both Genre Approach and Product Approach consist of three stages mainly related to linguistic knowledge. However, they differ in the social contexts of production and the presence of diverse types of writing connected to various situations.

### **1.3.3. The Process Approach**

The so-called Writing Process Approach is defined by Kroll (2001) as the modern umbrella term for various types of writing courses. However, it can be simplified to a process where student writers engage in writing tasks through a cyclical approach rather than an isolated approach. For this reason, a coordinated ordering of steps when aiming to elaborate a piece of writing is needed. The elements of work include but are not limited to designing and planning, revising the topics, drafting and editing the original production focused on the structures used and mechanics. Belinda (2006) states that teaching writing requires concentrating on the diverse processes and stages available to practice this skill.

Similarly, Hyland (2003), made a mention on the major impact on understanding the nature of writing with the use of the process approach. Researchers have found that writing processes are in general complex and recursive, but not linear. Consequently, this approach emphasizes the relevance of recursive procedures that involve prewriting, drafting, evaluating and revising. The first procedure is strongly recommended by Strömquist, (2007), who sees pre-writing as the introduction of techniques that assist learners to discover and engage with the topic. Instead of concentrating the attention on a finished product, pupils are asked to perform a number of drafts for a written piece of work. What is more, feedback and discussion from the reading audience allows the students to revise their drafts. Thus, rewriting and revision are a structural element in writing, and editing is a continuous process of multiple levels. Along the drafting process, certain activities are executed; idea generator for the pre-writing stage, elaboration of the first draft with special attention to content, also known as discovering meaning, to then work with a second, third and more drafts of the composition which along with the writer, content and purpose are the crucial components of a writing instruction. It is important to say that the process in mention is characterized as a learner-centered approach whose ultimate goal is to develop learners as writers who can produce well-structured compositions with good grammar at the end of the sessions.

## **Limitations**

Again, Hyland (2003) detected weaknesses in the process approach from a social perspective. One of them is the view of writing as a decontextualized skill that considers the individual as an isolated writer when transmitting their personal ideas. To prevent this, writers should be aware of the general principles of thinking and composing to set out and communicate their ideas. Such actions allow the writer to take an active role in the information process step, but at the same time, the real processes of language use are ignored. The second weakness to mention is the reduced role of the teachers when the students respond to their writing assignments and lack the feedback from an external observer. The third weakness is the inexistence of conscious teaching “in the structure of target next types”. That is to say, students are expected to write or turn in a second draft based on the marginal observations and comments given by the teacher.

## **Stages and activities of the Process Approach**

All the students involved in the learning of writing processes need to engage in the activities contained in several stages of the Process Approach. These activities can be used as frequently as needed by the writers.

- **Prewriting**

An outstanding characteristic of the process approach is that learners gather and generate ideas prior to beginning the writing assignment. Once this stage is accomplished, brainstorming and open discussions held by learners are effective aids to gather ideas. Steele (1992) declares that students of writing are free to use a number of methods in the initial pre-writing step that include but are not limited to brainstorming, word clustering and free writing, in a quest for self-discovery and generating writers’ own ideas. Brainstorming is a classical strategy that urges learners to think quickly in order to produce ideas before a given problem; the best way to do it is without pressure or influence of any structure or judgment: In order to do this effectively, collaborative learning is required to ensure successful results. Planning is another relevant activity during the initial stages of writing; this helps pupils to organize ideas and write successfully. Flower & Hayes (1981) assure that planning is a mental strategy that the writer can use and return to, at any time along the composition process.

Note making is an activity that aims to generate and organize collected ideas. At first, ideas come up with no structure or order, it is recommended then to work with categories by means of labeling or tagging these ideas using appropriate names for headings and categories. Undeniably, organizing ideas and using a structured order becomes an advantage for the writers at the moment of using them.

- **Composing /Drafting**

Experienced writers claim that the most difficult part of composing is starting it; in this regard, Kayne & Matson (2018) state that writing requires a large amount of attention, application and focus through promoting the exploration and discovery of deep ideas aiming to produce a quality text. The stage of drafting occurs once the pre-writing activities have been completed, that is to say: topic selection, data collection and preparation of outline. Drafting calls for students to write their essays without stopping until they are done. Precisely, writers will have to focus on the writing work and postpone the grammar and spelling revision for the final stages.

- **Revising**

Simpson (2013) states that good writers take care of concluding their writing assignment first addressing organization and ideas; to then check details of content. Complete and thorough revision is a goal at this stage, and the mistakes of form can be tackled during the editing stage. Revising deals with the reorganization of sentences and the insertion of appropriate vocabulary, which are key aspects of the process approach. The deletion of unnecessary sentences and rearranging words or paragraphs belong to this stage, too.

- **Editing**

The final stage of the process approach to writing is editing. It is mainly focused on linguistic accuracy such as grammar, spelling and punctuation. Hewings & Curry (2003) declare that this stage involves checking references and formatting the students' writing. Several strategies to correct mistakes can be used, for instance, pair work, group work, as well as using resources at hand like textbooks, dictionaries or computers.

#### **1.4. Teaching Writing in EFL Classes**

Brown (1994) argues that “a simplistic view of writing would assume that written language is simply the graphic representation of spoken language...”

(p.335). Writing seems to be more complex than this; therefore, writing instruction is imperative, as Brown (1994) states by claiming that writing is “as different from speaking as swimming is from walking” (p.335). This is sustained and developed by Hedge (2005), who posits that writing involves more than producing accurate and comprehensive sentences and phrases. This author suggests that writing has to do with guiding learners to produce entire and meaningful segments of communication, in order to connect and develop information, thoughts, or supporting opinions for a reader in particular or a conglomerate of readers.

Consequently, effective writing implies several aspects such as a high degree of organization regarding the improvement and constructing of ideas, information and arguments. Similarly, Hedge (2005) remarks other features that include: a high degree of accuracy, complex grammar strategies, a careful selection of terms and sentence structures in order to generate style, tone and information suitable for the individuals who read a written text. The points above stated make the teaching of writing a critical concern, since all of these aspects should be carefully considered for efficient learning of writing strategies.

Likewise, over the last years, dramatic changes have occurred with regard to the usage of a variety of methods and strategies for teaching writing to EFL learners. Moreover, recent methodologies in the EFL writing classes, the role of technology for teaching writing, and the use of genre-based approach has been recalled in several studies. Undeniably, knowing different methodologies, strategies, and techniques for instructing learners in writing is necessary to any responsible writing teacher in EFL settings. Amin Mozaheb, Seifoori, & Biglar Beigi (2013), stress that “an effective teacher should have enough knowledge about the historical orientations of EFL writing” (p.19). This information would be a plus for making appropriate decisions on the methodology and techniques to use with the EFL community of learners. Likewise, teaching learners in an EFL atmosphere is not a simple task and certain conditions are required. Being tolerant, patient, enthusiastic, flexible, proactive and intuitive are some of them. Regarding these individualities, there are other features of effective EFL writing educators. From exhaustive research, it has been determined that teachers should be experts in writing; that is to say, they have to be aware of

a wide range of methodologies in language teaching and be ready to accommodate diverse techniques to teach EFL pupils. On this regard, Graham & Perin (2007) state, “teachers that achieve exceptional success in teaching writing recognize the importance of frequent and sustained writing” (p.5). With no doubt, each EFL educator should consider the influence of sustained writing in an EFL setting. Similarly, an effective writing educator should bring authentic models of writing from different books, journals, newspapers, and magazines. The use of authentic material in writing classes helps students to increase learning efficiency in an EFL setting. In a similar way, teaching students to use outlines before writing can increase self-confidence of learners in writing classes. Additionally, effective teachers ask students to be critical thinkers along the writing process by using appropriate techniques that match the learning styles of the class.

Martin (2012) expresses his own point of view when he claims that the most effective way that EFL writing teachers can help their students to be better writers are summarized in the following points:

- Helping students get rid of negative attitudes towards writing through the free writing process.
- Giving students feasible writing assignments, complete with specific instructions.
- Giving specific feedback and correction in writing conferences, or in written form. (p.7)

Martin (2012) advises that if these three suggestions are followed, combined with the instructor’s tolerance and care, then “writing that can be postponed, will not be.” On the other hand, Baleghizadeh & Mozaheb (2011) emphasize the relevance of using pair work and group work as supplementary activities for teaching writing. They consider that a benefit pair and group work provide the learners is that they help them to effortlessly internalize newly learned material.

To sum up, in the teaching of writing in EFL environments, effective writing teachers should use integrative approaches while teaching; it means that they should be able to consider the needs of the students and then decide on the appropriate approach to be applied their classes.

### 1.4.1. Principles for Teaching Writing

According to Nunan (2003), some of the principles that every educator should consider when teaching writing are to be detailed below, which in the opinion of the author, can be adapted according to the different learning situations presented in the classroom settings.

- **Understand your students' reasons for writing:** Nunan (2003) expresses that the incompatibility of interests regarding school goals between the learners and the educator, or between teachers and their institutions may lead to discontent in the teaching learning of writing. Yet, the actors of the educational process have to negotiate and agree on the topics and approaches to be implemented.

In the words of Whitaker, n.d., "for at least some assignments, providing students with choice, promoting ownership, and helping students draw on their own experience, interests, inquiry, etc., can engage students as writers" (p.3). It is certain that when students write about issues, problems, or subjects they find relevant to their lives, they improve the probabilities for their engagement.

- **Provide many opportunities for students to write:** Undoubtedly, practice makes perfect, and Nunan (2003) indicates that the amount of practice needs to be set forth in the planning. Evidently, teachers should dedicate enough time to writing sessions since sustained writing is a relevant feature of writing classes. To this extent, Graham, as cited in Seifoori, Amin Mozaheb, & Biglar Beigi (2012), asserts that learners should work at least one hour a day in the process of writing, planning, revising, authoring, or publishing texts. Nevertheless, Nunan (2003) also claims that extreme procedures such as grading every piece of writing from school-goers increases their affective filter and ends up in demotivation.

- **Make feedback helpful and meaningful:** Despite the urge of writers to be corrected, confusing comments produce a counterproductive and disappointing effect. For this reason, Nunan suggests clarity, briefness and a supportive approach in the feedback. Likewise, Peterson (2008) points out that conferencing is an active way to offer learners feedback individually and to provide "both the opportunity to clarify inaccurate understandings of concepts and support for students' writing development" (p.78). Furthermore, this researcher agrees that conversation with students presents great opportunities

to provide feedback, as well as to receive it, especially when teachers ask pupils metacognitive questions that help them reflect on their learning.

- **Clarify for yourself, and for your students, how their writing will be evaluated:** Nunan (2003) asserts that objectivity in the rubrics along with properly detailed relevant grade scales for students, provide them with a strong sense of purpose when working on their written production. This way, autonomy is achieved, and learners shall be fully aware of what is wanted from them and how they can do it.

In like manner, Jokić (2017) observes that “if a teacher explains the use of rubrics beforehand, students are provided with a clear understanding of what is expected of them and they have tangible guidelines about what makes a good paragraph, or a conclusion, etc.” (p.216). Thus, rubrics allow students to understand the used criteria and what is considered “appropriate” in a certain type of a writing assignment.

Recently, a study conducted by Hochman & Wexler (2017) uncovered a long hidden fact, only a quarter of the learners who undergo writing instruction manage to obtain the required level to operate proficiently at an academic or professional level. The reflection of these authors also led to the conclusion that quantity is not necessarily correlated to quality, in other words, piling up complex writing tasks on students at times leads to plagiarism or even fraud. Instead, the premise of “the sooner, the better” makes sense and it solidly grounds the imperious need of scaffolding the knowledge and practice of writers from their early ages. The principles are now presented in detail:

- **Explicit instruction starting young:** Remarkably, Hochman & Wexler (2017) express that learners from elementary grades need to be taught how the conventions of written language vary from those of spoken language, communicating with more accuracy and clarity, anticipating what the reader needs to know and understand, and using appropriate punctuation and keywords. Additionally, these researchers acknowledge the pivotal role of students avoiding errors in spelling and grammar in their narrative in order to prevent that mistakes distract a reader from the content. All this needs to start at school with explicit instruction, enough practice and feedback to expand the projected writing skills. Nevertheless, to provide explicit instruction in learning how to write, Soiferman (2017) suggests that “teachers must become

knowledgeable about how to teach writing” (p.13). In his thought, not every educator can become a writing teacher without first receiving some instruction regarding how students learn to write. It is decisive that teachers of writing learn about writing and how to teach it. In other words, they should understand how pupils learn how they can put down their ideas on paper coherently.

- **Sentences as the building blocks:** Hochman & Wexler posit, “in many schools, the quantity of writing has long been valued over its quality” (p.34). In this regard, quality, not quantity, should be rewarded. It is certain that students must learn to write at length, but if a writer cannot compose an effective sentence, he or she will never produce an effective piece of writing. As a result, it is fundamental that students learn how to write powerful sentences. As one writing researcher has observed, sentences “are literally miniature compositions”. As a process, learners need to acquire basic sentence-level writing skills in which they explain, paraphrase, or summarize content, use appropriate grammar, and get effective feedback, to move forward to more challenging tasks such as writing paragraphs, essays or compositions.

- **Writing embedded in curriculum content:** Hochman & Wexler (2017) state that to expand the benefits of writing instruction, learners should start practicing their writing skills on topics embedded in content rather than general topics, since writing about topics that draw only students’ personal opinions generates an unproductive task which might not increase their learning. On the other hand, researchers sustain that when students write about subjects they are studying, they learn how to synthesize information and produce their own understandings. Likewise, they assume that writing and content knowledge are closely related as it is inferred that an individual cannot write well about something he/she does not know well. Following the same line of thought, Vermont Writing Collaborative (2016), in one of its educational articles states that evidently “students struggle with writing for many reasons, but one of the most frequent and least addressed is knowledge and understanding for content” (p.35). Most of the time, learners have no idea of what they are communicating about and it is imperative that they demonstrate their skills to write not just about their ideas in a particular piece, but as a transferable ability.

- **Curriculum content as a driver of writing rigor:** Blackburn (2008), believes that “rigor, at its core, is about ensuring that every student is provided

the opportunity to grow in incredible ways” (p.1). In this sense, rigor means grow and succeed in an environment where learners are supported and expected to learn at high levels. According to Hochman & Wexler (2017), the content of the curriculum determines the rigor of the writing activities. Consequently, if educators connect their students’ writing activities with the subject matter they are teaching, they will realize they can use the same activities for any level or content area keeping the same form and providing the structure learners need to accomplish the writing task successfully.

- **Grammar taught in the context of writing:** Hochman & Wexler postulate, “research has consistently found that teaching grammar rules in isolation doesn’t work” (p.36). Evidently, it does not mean that an educator should not teach grammar; however, it would be ideal if the grammar and writing conventions instruction is taught in the context of pupils’ own writing. The authors above cited suggest that a useful exercise is sentence combining. To them, this activity is more engaging and it reduces the need of remembering grammatical expressions. Williams (2011) asserts that several studies such as Combs (1977); Daiker, Kerek & Morenberg (1978); Howie (1979) found that learners who were taught this technique of “sentence combining” increased control over sentence structure and produced more developed writing. In addition, Williams (2011) remarks that teaching sentence combining has been demonstrated to improve students’ writing performance and he supports the idea that it does not involve teaching grammar.

- **Planning and revising:** To Hochman & Wexler (2017) these are the two most relevant phases of the writing process. They consider that all students need to plan before they write. Planning or pre-writing activities, as Brown (2007) names them, have a main purpose, which is to support pupils in generating ideas and in encouraging them to write. To do this, it is significant to activate any prior knowledge that can guide them in developing their written text. Brainstorming, mind–mapping or group discussions are cooperative activities educators may use to activate students’-planning skills.

Once learners have well planned their outline by ordering their thoughts and choosing the appropriate terms to structure their sentences. Then comes the most significant phase of writing: revising. At this point, learners apply the sentence-level skills and different techniques they have acquired to vary their

sentence structure and insert transitional words between sentences and paragraphs to elaborate their work with flow and sense. In the words of Brown (1994), “all good writers go through several steps of revision because they want to make their writing the best it can be” (p.353). Doubtlessly, effective writers use what they learned about their writing and they reconsider what they have written to improve or make it more convincing.

#### **1.4.2. Teacher Professional Development**

In the words of Marcelo (2009), the professional development of teachers is considered as “an individual and collective process that should be accomplished in the workplace of the educator, i.e. the school” (p.5). Accordingly, teachers are expected to develop their personal and professional skills to transform such knowledge into relevant learning for students in classroom settings. As well, in the current century, knowledge is being revolutionized at a greater speed; therefore, it is decisive that teachers make an extra effort to continue learning in order to encourage students to be suitably involved in the pleasurable experience of learning something new day after day. Definitely, teachers’ professional development implies variations in the teaching and learning activities with the ultimate goal of improving learners’ academic results. To Bredeson (2002), professional development suggests work opportunities that foster creativity and reflective skills of the educators, accordingly, enabling them to perform better when providing instruction.

In consequence, to create persistent enhancement in the teaching of writing, professional development must support educators in their own professional knowledge making. Pressley, Mohan, Raphael, & Fingeret (2007) argue that when educators recognize a need for improvement in their teaching methodologies and techniques, they become more skilled at teaching writing. Definitely, with the initiative of teaching teachers first, a level of confidence about how to deliver writing instruction more consistently can make a real difference in student success. Unquestionably, teachers must be trained and committed to writing instruction if they expect their students to achieve their best writing skills. Moreover, educators must feel competent as writers and writing teachers in order to provide the kind of instruction and modeling that would support their pupils’ development into qualified writers.

On this latter point, professional knowledge and training for the teaching of writing is required since educators need to understand how to interpret curriculum documents, including standards, writing skills, techniques and strategies, concepts, and content that can be taught while learners are writing. Likewise, teachers need to know how to build social structures that support independent and collaborative work, how to effectively employ a variety of technologies, and most importantly, how to include learners writing in their first language and how to assess students' work while they are participating in the writing process. In other words, teachers' professional development is paramount to provide high quality writing opportunities for all students so that they feel fully prepared to become better writers.

### **How should teacher training be positioned within any institution?**

Methodologies to teacher training in any school will realistically involve interests and concerns of directors, instructors, and most importantly, the students who will benefit from the instruction. Miller (1998), as cited in Reynolds (2001), indicates that "teacher training is one way that basic writing teachers hold power to influence a school's institutional structure in order to improve conditions for students" (p.44). In a similar vein, training itself, suggests a certain well-preparedness and quality instruction that will increase working conditions in the community of learners.

### **How is teacher training tied in with community training**

Evidently, teacher training is effective when a community of writing educators, with solid lines of communication and opportunities share teaching strategies, successes, and frustrations that are part of the work scenery. Reynolds (2001) asserts that "since received knowledge about basic writing is only made meaningful in its present application, communication about classroom moments, the moments of practice that are at the same time embedded with theoretical foundations, also improves teacher training efforts" (p.46). Besides, it seems to be imperative to create conditions for educators that inspire participation in institutional life, because it provides a great opportunity to work collaboratively toward improved writing instruction. Wells (1994) underlined already over a decade ago, that teachers should be encouraged to model quality of learning and development as they work together to improve climate and opportunities for learning that they provide for pupils.

### 1.4.3. Professional Teaching Standards in the Ecuadorian Curriculum

The Ministry of Education (2012) asserts that Ecuadorian in-Service English Teacher Standards are based on the document developed by the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). This document is structured into five domains (Language, Culture, Curriculum Development, Assessment, Professionalism and Ethical Commitment), which fit with those stated for the general curriculum and some of which have to do with English language teaching and learning. More details related to each domain are described by the Ministry of Education (2012), as follows:

- **Language:** It includes specific fields of domain for language structure and communication, the acquisition of language and development and language fluency in order to help English language learners develop language as well as literacy and succeed in the content areas.

- **Culture:** Ecuador is a multicultural nation, which means learners may descend from different cultures. In this sense, Ecuadorian English Educators need to have knowledge of other cultures and know how culture may hinder their learning of English. It is crucial that teachers know, understand, and use major concepts, principles, theories and all things related to the nature and cultural role to build a supportive learning environment for pupils.

- **Curriculum Development:** This domain reveals teachers' understanding of practices and approaches that are related to planning, applying, and managing standards-based English and content instruction. Consequently, educators are skilled in teaching strategies for developing and integrating language skills. Likewise, teachers incorporate technological resources as well as select and adapt teaching resources for their students.

- **Assessment:** A domain that includes the issues involved for learners and the teachers' knowledge to deal with them. These issues include accountability, bias, special education testing, language proficiency, and accommodations in formal testing situations.

- **Professionalism and Ethical Commitment:** It intends to keep teachers up-to-date with new instructional techniques, research results, and advances in the English teaching field for professional development. As soon as educators apply this knowledge, they will be able to improve their instruction. Moreover, the collaborative work with school staff and community

of learners will improve the learning environment, and support pupils and their families.

#### **1.4.4. Effective Strategies for improving Writing Skills**

Teaching EFL learners writing strategies has a strong impact on the quality of their writing. Since all writing follows the same process, which includes generating ideas, developing and organizing ideas, revising, and editing, to maintain an effective writers' cycle through these stages it is advisable to apply different strategies that boost students' writing skills. Next, Pembroke (2002) highlights several strategies related to each stage of the writing process, which are summarized as follows:

##### **Strategies for Generating Ideas**

- **Rapid Writing:** In Pembroke's view (2002), it is effective to have students involved in rapid writing at the beginning of an assignment because they manage to access their prior knowledge, become involved with content, review and reflect, and begin to set direction for writing assignments. In the words of Jackson & Douglas (2008), the learner is expected to quickly draw or write down all the fresh ideas they have about a specific topic with no self-editing. The learners then choose an idea from the topics they detailed. This helpful strategy can be used in different manners, including: prewriting; brainstorming for a specific question; or writing for reflection, learning logs, and so on.

- **Setting the context:** It is significant that experienced writers anticipate the ideas that readers would need to know on the subject. Pembroke (2002), underlines that when writers imagine and take into account possible questions that their intended audience might have in connection with a specific topic; they have the opportunity to produce possible content for their writing.

- **Adding content:** Commenting on this generating strategy, Pembroke (2002) recognizes it offers feedback to learners before they start their first draft. Consequently, students exchange their brainstorming notes and develop questions to help them encompass additional details for their first draft.

##### **Strategies for Developing and Organizing Ideas**

- **Webbing, Mapping and More:** When using these strategies, Pembroke (2002) argues that students are capable of sorting their ideas and

reorganizing the information collected in order to make connections and determine forms of their writing. To this extent, Ariana (2015) also expects that “webbing technique can improve students’ writing skill since it is believed that webbing is a high level of note-taking, drafting and brainstorming technique” (p.160) In this sense, it can be a great tool to help the students in writing tasks. Similarly, pupils will be able to understand cognitive connections or links among their subjects, ideas and other information. Some strategies for webbing and mapping include clustering, comparing, contrasting, generalizing, outlining, relating, sorting, among others.

- **Supporting the Main Idea:** Pembroke (2002) observes that it is a helpful strategy that supports learners to select the appropriate main ideas to be used as a topic sentence in an information paragraph, and then learn how to select effective details that will serve as a support to the main ideas.

- **Adding details:** a strategy that leads learners to ask questions not only to support, but also to elaborate on the main ideas from their first draft of a writing task. Pembroke (2002) mentions that it is suitable for the educator to provide a structure for asking pertinent questions.

### **Strategies for Revising and Editing**

- **Reorganizing Ideas:** This strategy works when writers intend to revisit their writing as they draft to add, delete and modify ideas and information. Witte & Faigley (1981), assert that one strategy writers use is ARMS (add, remove, move, substitute).

- **Asking Questions to Revise Writing:** Pembroke (2002) indicates that it consists of having learners ask other students questions and provide specific feedback regarding other student’s writing. In this sense, learners become more responsible since they acquire a sense of taking personal accountability for their writing.

- **Peer Editing:** According to Kobilova (2016), “peer editing is a dominant tool in writing process. It can increase minimal or deep learning” (p.37). When students are engaged in peer editing activities, they are provided a timely opportunity to engage in relevant conversations while reading each other’s work. What is more, Pembroke (2002) remarks learners are able to identify

areas of concern and learn a greater deal of how to put information together and communicate thoughts successfully.

- **Proofreading Without Partners:** When students develop strategies for proofreading their own work, Pembroke (2002) says they are building independence as writers. “Reading backwards” is an active strategy that the researcher calls to have students see individual words and detect errors in spelling. By applying this strategy, pupils can notice syntax and punctuation errors. Likewise, reading from front to back at a moderate speed will support learners reading for meaning.

#### **1.4.5. Creating an Inspirational Environment for EFL writers**

Becoming a talented writer of English is a serious issue for many EFL students due to possible assumptions that they simply cannot write in English. This negative feeling may lead students to experience anxiety and frustration when writing, and at a time, hinder the process of developing appropriate skills to write in a foreign language. Therefore, it is essential to recreate an inspiring environment that motivates students to take risks in their writing.

- **Preparing Students to Write**

A proven way of assisting EFL students before they even begin writing is by activating their prior knowledge. Watts-Taffe & Truscott (2000) highlight how crucial it is to make sure that learners have the opportunity to reflect on what they already know before the task starts. Without doubt, students are assisted to add new information into existing structures of knowledge, activating long term-memory. To accomplish this, several strategies can be applied. Some of them are detailed as follows:

- ✓ **Graphic Organizers:** They can be used as visual tools for students to write or draw what they already know about a topic. This is quite helpful for teachers because they can evaluate whether additional instruction is needed.

- ✓ **Cooperative learning:** A useful strategy that conducts pupils to gain self-confidence while working in a cooperative way. Learners have the choice to gather information from books, the internet, or each other as they work together with another learner or group of students.

- ✓ **Read-alouds:** Since writing is tricky, sometimes it is tough to find the right sequence of words. Reading aloud can help students to make sure their

sentences sound good; therefore, its implementation finds it imperative to read what has been written to guarantee its coherence.

- **Scaffolding Instruction**

According to Dickson, Chard & Simmons as cited in Herrera (2010), scaffolding of instruction relates to “how the teacher provides support for learners through the selection and use of materials, types of tasks, and interaction among students and between students and the teacher” (p.117). In other words, this process offers learners support to go beyond, so that they feel self-confident to apply new strategies and skills autonomously. Instructional scaffolding has roots in Vigotsky’s (1978) notion that with an adult’s help, kids could achieve tasks that they usually could not perform by themselves. In the light of this, in responsive pedagogy, the educator must be strategic about the kinds of student support he or she entails during the development of the lesson. Such support includes: Activities that activate students’ background knowledge about a certain topic, grouping configurations that reveal not only insights acquired from students’ biographies, but also those gained from information that pupils shared during the course of the lesson, constructive and positive feedback that increases students’ motivation, and reduces their tension.

In the particular case of writing, Vernon (2002), as cited in Vonna, Mukminatien, & Dewanti (2015), suggests that scaffolding should be given to the students from prewriting until the final draft. Definitely, it is relevant to implement scaffolding techniques since scaffolding in teaching writing is a process that allows the educators to organize writing tasks in a systematic way to meet the needs of the pupils.

According to Stuyf (2002), as cited in Vonna, Mukminatien, & Dewanti (2015), the scaffolding techniques provided are activities and tasks that “(1) motivate or enlist the student’s interest related to the task, (2) simplify the task to make it more manageable for a student, (3) provide some direction in order to help the students focus on achieving the goal, (4) reduce frustration, (5) model and clearly define the expectations of the activity to be performed” (p.228). Consequently, scaffolding can be assumed to decrease writing anxiety since learners engage in supportive environment, are inspired to learn, and experience less frustration in the completion of writing tasks.

Interestingly, recent research indicates that students enjoy more when working cooperatively. As a result, having students work in small groups scaffolding is an effective strategy to produce the language required to perform a writing task. Additionally, when EFL learners are creating written pieces in their classrooms, they struggle with the necessary term to accomplish their tasks. Here, scaffolding amongst themselves works, since students take advantage of one another's strengths, and feel more positive about what they are writing.

- **Technology**

Beyond question, the teaching-learning activities need to be carefully sustained in such a way they are meaningful to EFL students. These days, the impact of the increased presence of computers into individuals' lives has been widely recognized linked to the importance of writing and the teaching of writing. Commonly, it is observed that most students from every walk of life, have access to computers and other gadgets at home or at school. Consequently, learning to use a computer at a very early age is an endorsed goal of students. As educators, we can no longer ignore technology. Sandolo (2010) declares that in recent research, studies show that the use of integrating technology, such as the internet, enriches students' overall writing skills. A great number of learners are exploring the web and they have found out that useful writing tools are provided on it.

According to Scott & Mouza (2007), writing skills are critical at any level. At this point several studies have shown that students have less difficulties when they write their thoughts and feelings down on the computer. This occurs because learners have the opportunity to express more freely without being apprehensive about what others may think or say aloud in class. Some of the resources learners utilize include: Wikis, blogs, and chats. When using them, the ability of the students to write meaningful texts seems to be increased greatly. The researchers Scott & Mouza (2007) also consider that the tools previously stated have increasingly provided a prolonged motivation towards writing. Hence, those learners who declared they hate writing and cannot write and do not want to write, can write and the most important, they do want to write. In fact, students need to know there is a purpose behind their writing. Fascinatingly, Halsey (2007) shares her experience as a teacher of young children. She recognizes that her passion for both, literacy and ICT helped her

incorporate in her learners' lives attractive learning experiences that reflect their interest for creating pieces of writing. The educator reveals that she created a website whose components grew gradually according to the needs, interests, and skills of her pupils. Thus, the first component to appear was a "podcast" section, where every Friday two students reflect on the weeks' events and learning and produce a podcast which is uploaded in the class website. The following component for her website was the "exciting writing" section. Here, her main purpose was to provide her learners with an audience, a purpose, and of of course increased motivation to produce quality writing. A third component to appear was the "events" component. It was engageable because through this, students recall the most memorable events that occurred in their classroom and at school. She stated that a recent addition to her website was a "word power" with the aim of providing learners a stimulus to search interesting words and create an online word bank where they store words to access and use while writing.

In short, the increase of technology integration in the classroom is significantly contributing to the revolution in teaching writing in EFL contexts. Such integration also evidences a shift in instructive models from a behavioral to a constructivist learning methodology.

#### **1.4.6. Developing stimulus to write**

Writing is indeed one of the greatest challenges an educator can encounter in the classroom. Normally, learners are not eager to write simply due to a lack of stimulation to do it or to enjoy doing it. Furthermore, the majority of individuals do not have the habit of writing anything of any length in their everyday lives. However, this is what teachers often ask their pupils to do in English.

Remarkably, Bruning & Horn (2000), propose four clusters of conditions as the key to developing motivation to write: nurturing functional beliefs about writing, fostering engagement by using authentic writing tasks, providing a supportive context for writing, and creating a positive emotional environment.

- **Cluster 1: Nurturing Functional Beliefs about Writing:** Certainly, beliefs about writing must be amply effective to carry the writer through the difficult and often emotion-laden processes of writing. From this research, many students consider that writing has value, especially for achieving

academic goals. Likewise, the idea of developing self-efficacy as a writer seems to be essential to writing motivation. According to Bandura (1994), self-efficacy beliefs influence the way people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. In this sense, writing self-efficacy provides benefits for learners since it decreases anxiety and rises persistence in writing tasks. Similarly, Walker (2003) further posits that persistence may also be increased when students' interest and motivation are developed. For instance, when learners are given the responsibility to choose their own writing topics. Another aspect has to do with the comment students receive, if the comments on the writing task are positive, this may strengthen self-efficacy beliefs. On the contrary, negative comments will weaken them.

It is also crucial to remark that several dimensions potentially vital for developing writing motivation remain unexplored. One of these beliefs is related to the social role of writing. Thus, in many classrooms it is observed that idea generation, information gathering, writing, and revising can be solitary and isolating performances. Contrasting to these conditions is writing in literacy-oriented classrooms where writing and talk about writing are central features of the classrooms intellectual and social life.

**• Cluster 2: Fostering Engagement Using Authentic Writing Tasks:**

It is certain that schools should provide the best opportunities to engage most learners in the process of writing. However, not only the simple opportunity needs to be granted, but also the quality of writing experience, which is generally determined by how teachers use writing in their classes. Bruning & Horn (2000) assert that “teachers can help break writing tasks into manageable parts, which not only reduces the processing demands of a complex task, but also allows students to monitor their progress and experience success during the writing process” (p.30). In the light of this, there is no doubt that educators play a significant role when selecting challenging tasks and guiding their pupils in the development of strategies, confidence, and writing performance. Emphasizing this point, Masood (2013) postulates that “the most effective way of improving writing skills is authentic materials, like newspapers editorials, columns, advertisement, films, cartoons, TV, and radio programs” (p.21). These means and techniques involved in the teaching of writing energize the students and set their minds to thinking. In addition,

when authentic materials are properly selected, exploited, and implemented in the classroom setting. Even more, they can be of great help to boost students' writing skills. It is suitable to add that there is a great variety of materials available in newspapers, broadcasts, magazines, internet, CNN, BBC, and so on in the form of crosswords puzzles, cartoons, horoscope, weather reports, bulletins, sport news, recipes, book reviews, advertisements, letters, and many other that if explored cautiously can offer a great deal of interest and excitement among learners of English. As a result, teachers with the help of their experience, skills, and ability should adapt authentic materials appropriately for use in different settings, in accordance with the learners' age and their proficiency, without excluding curriculum objectives. Masood (2013) also insists that the adaptation of the materials to the activities stated in the original textbooks is important. Undoubtedly, hard work is needed to coordinate it with course book material. Despite the difficulties to adapt authentic material, it makes the learning pleasurable, meaningful, and significant, since students feel they are involved in relevant tasks.

In the words of Tuner & Scott (1995), authentic tasks have much in common with the best of real-world experience, since it affords opportunities for developing students' autonomy an interest-based learning in a real context.

**• Cluster 3: Providing a Supportive Context for Writing:**

Recent research on writing sustains that context also defines the level of skills required to complete a writing task effectively. Hayes (1996), as cited in Bruning & Horn (2000), hypothesizes that "each act of writing takes place in a context that defines the initial nature of the writing task, affects the goals that writers set, and influences the decisions they will make as writing progresses" (p.31). In fact, in order to get students fully engaged in writing, they precise to receive benefits from motivational resources integrated in the task itself. Additionally, learners' engagement level increases when they consider tasks to be meaningful and connect their activities to their effort. On the contrary, when students perceive tasks as difficult or dull, their interest and cooperation decrease because they fell this kind of tasks take them beyond their ability, so learners start experiencing anxiety that will lead to poor writing. Herrera (2010) states that "the affective filter controls the extent to which students are able to actually take in what they are supposed to be learning" (p.33). In saying this,

she refers to the fact that if students feel comfortable in their community of learning and know their language efforts will be met with support, they are more likely to take risks with their written production. Therefore, it is imperative that educators lower their learners' affective filter, otherwise, it will raise significantly, and the result often tends to involve a decrease in learners' motivation, engagement, and disrupts writing entirely.

#### • **Cluster 4: Creating a Positive Emotional Environment**

Research has documented that anyone who writes has experienced at least some negative feelings about writing. To Vanhala (2008), motivation varies according to the situation, since one might be motivated to perform a certain task, but in broader contexts, certain knowledge might seem irrelevant. For this reason, it is convenient to foster positive emotional environment for writing. A good starting point is dismissing conditions that make writing a negative experience. To accomplish this, educators have to ensure that pupils are involved in pleasurable, successful writing activities in a positive learning environment. In such environment, teachers pay special attention to their students' written production, and they also learn to treat each other's' ideas with respect. Another aspect that leads to negative attitudes toward writing has to do with the fact of assigning students tasks or topics where they have little content mastery. Definitely, it creates a writing issue since if learners demonstrate poorly structured knowledge they will not experience a successful writing practice. In addition, simply having knowledge may stimulate writing. Although it is relevant for teachers to give students manageable writing tasks, it is equally important to break major writing tasks into subtasks in order to make the tasks adaptable. By doing this, students will have multiple opportunities to revise and improve their work.

#### **1.4.7. Issues on Teaching and Learning Writing in EFL classrooms**

Over the past decades of research on teaching writing to EFL learners, a number of issues have appeared, some of which greatly affect the acquisition of foreign language writing. Likewise, much research has suggested that writing in a foreign language-learning context is a complex, difficult and demanding task. To Alsamadani (2010), "this difficulty and complexity arise from the fact that writing includes discovering a thesis, developing support for it, organizing, revising, and finally editing it to ensure an effective, error-free

piece of writing” (p.53). That is to say, that producing a text for most EFL learners is challenging because the writing process suggests a wide range of cognitive as well as linguistic strategies of which EFL students are mostly unaware. Moreover, learners find it difficult to support their ideas with specific reasons or details. At this point, the responsibility seems to fall on the educator’s shoulders, who is accountable for enriching students’ abilities to express themselves efficiently in written form.

Most of the time, students feel bored with the classic writing class because the teacher usually explains what the text is and tells the basic structure of the text. In most of the cases, teachers do not provide any resources to support the learning process. In fact, research advocates that it is hard to create a writing class that is stimulating for learners. On the other hand, other issues make students feel more challenged to make their own writing. Here, Fareed (2016) gives a brief look at some of those issues.

- Students lack knowledge of appropriate vocabulary; they do not know the correct use of words.
- Learners also have difficulties in grammar and syntax, so they make mistakes in subject-verb agreement, pronouns, tenses, articles, prepositions, and basic sentence structures.
- Lack of ideas affect learners’ writing skills.
- Writing organization is also a challenge to learners as their writing lacks coherence, consolidation of knowledge and use of formal transitional words. (p.85)

On the other hand, several studies have found that some challenges affect educators’ performance when teaching writing; these are briefly mentioned below:

- Lack of training as far as teaching methodology is concerned.
- Activities carried out in the community of learning are not student-centered.
- No serious effort is made to develop students’ aptitude or initiative to promote preparedness.
- There is lack of whole language approach.

## **Suggestions to improve EFL writing skills**

There are several countermeasures to improve learners' writing skills. To begin, Fareed (2016) suggests reading to develop better writing and to enrich vocabulary. He also claims, that it is crucial to develop a writing culture and provide learners as many opportunities as possible for writing practice. In the same way, the importance of effective educators cannot be denied. As a result, it is significant that they be trained not only in active teaching practices but also in providing encouraging and constructive feedback. Equally, it is pertinent to be aware that teaching writing should include methods of imparting adequate knowledge of the conventions of written speech and the basis of grammar and syntax. Therefore, the purpose of teaching writing is guiding learners to achieve the highest ability to communicate effectively using words. Additionally, writing has to be given the attention it deserves in schools. In addition, a determining factor that would help students become better writers has to do with the development of their autonomy for being active and independent in the learning process. In fact, Koura & Zahran (2017) state that "students become less dependent on the teacher by learning to collaborate with their peers" (p.188). In saying this, they refer that sharing experiences with others increases the likelihood that what are learning will be more meaningful.

### **1.5. The Role of the Teacher when Teaching Writing**

There is no doubt that teachers play a crucial role in the development of writing skills. Thus, an effective writer teacher should know how to help enhance the writing skills in their students. To Harmer (2001), although the teachers need to expand some or all of the usual roles (controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, observer, etc.) when students are asked to write, the ones that the researcher emphasized as especially important are as follows:

- **Motivator:** Harmer (2001) asserts that a principal role in writing tasks is closely related to the premise of motivating students and creating the right conditions for the generation of ideas, and encouraging them to make as much effort as possible for maximum benefit. In addition, this scholar affirms that when learners are involved in creative writing activities, they are able to find it feasible to produce ideas. For instance, during poem writing-activities, teachers need to suggest lines to those pupils who cannot think of anything.

- **Resource:** When writing tasks are more extended, teachers should be ready to provide information and language whenever necessary. It is central that students know that teachers are prepared to look at their work as it evolves. To Harmer (2001), students are eager to receive advice and suggestions in a discrete way.

- **Feedback Provider:** According to Harmer (2001), giving feedback on writing tasks requires special care. As it was mentioned before, educators should respond positively and favorably to the content of what students have written. Similarly, when teachers start the correcting process in their students' written production, they should choose what and how much to focus on based on their learners' needs and on the activities they have assumed.

According to Brown (1994),

“As students are encouraged (in reading), to bring their own schemata to bear on understanding texts, and in writing to develop their own ideas, offer their own critical analysis, and find their own “voice,” the role of teacher must be one of facilitator and coach, not an authoritative director and arbiter” (p.340).

This scholar highlights the real role of the educator as the term itself expresses “facilitator”; that is to say, someone who offers guidance in supporting pupils to engage in the difficult process of composing but, in a respectful atmosphere for students' opinions, must not force his or her own beliefs on student writing.

#### **1.5.1. Teachers' Roles in the Ecuadorian English Curriculum**

According to the Ministry of Education (2016), The English Language Curriculum in Ecuador is based on learner-centered approach. It means that teaching methodologies are supposed to reflect and respond to students' strengths and challenges in order to facilitate the process of learning by supporting their motivation and engagement with learning. In the light of this, it is aimed to improve the learning process by providing students the necessary skills for interacting in a stimulating setting and communicating in local and international communities in the current century.

Although the proposed EFL curriculum focus is “learner-centered” and it is standardized across the country with objectives set forth by the Ministry of Education, teachers will not only simply be required to deliver a set of facts and information to the state. Instead, they will also be encouraged to recognize

that their pupils are individuals with diverse characteristics; therefore, different learners' styles, interests, or levels of motivation should be deeply analyzed to adapt methodologies, strategies and techniques suitably.

MINEDUC (2016) by means of the Ecuadorian English Curriculum lists key features that educators have to make evident:

- Teachers are focused on what and how the students are learning, not on their performance as an educator or on facts to be conveyed.
- Teachers recognize that students learn in several ways and at different rates, and that a personalized approach to instructing is needed.
- Teachers seek to involve students in the following aspects: affectively, psychologically, and intellectually.
- Teachers respect the personality of their learners as well as the personal feelings involved when they express themselves.
- Teachers are committed to a constructivist approach by building upon knowledge the learners already possess.
- Teachers involve their students in an active and dynamic process, rather than in a passive model.
- Teachers are aware that assessment is more formative than summative in nature. It supports the teacher with frequent feedback, which will be used in order to shape and support future learning.
- Teachers recognize that learning is not just acquiring facts but also developing skills that support lifelong learning. They also know that creating motivated and independent learners is a key goal of the curriculum (p.5-6)

### **1.5.2. Expected outcomes from the Students**

As the Ministry of Education (2016) pointed out in the Ecuadorian English Curriculum “learners will be brought up to a B1 level as identified by the Common European Framework of References (CEFR)” (p.8). At the level previously stated, students will be able to communicate in everyday situations in English, solve basic issues and transmit basic needs in circumstances such as travel, school, and work.

Similarly, in the English curriculum of our nation, it is specified that by the end of BGU learners will demonstrate they are able to:

- Handle communication in English in most familiar situations.
- Construct longer utterances, although pupils may not be able to use complex language.
- Produce simple connected texts on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.
- Describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions, and briefly give reasons and explanations for beliefs and plans.
- Read straightforward texts on subjects of interest and understand the main points of clear, standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.
- Write a personal letter, email or note on a familiar topic, describing an event or situation for an intended purpose with sufficient accuracy and coherence to be followed most of the time.

### **1.5.3. Writing as a Curricular Thread of the EFL Curriculum**

For both school levels, Educación General Básica (EGB) and Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU), the ELT area has been organized into five threads: Communication and Cultural Awareness, Oral Communication (Listening and Speaking), Reading, Writing, and Language through the Arts. Each of these threads can be further divided into sub-threads. In the specific case of writing, this skill constitutes the main curricular thread and Initial Literacy and Text Production integrate the Sub-Threads.

The National EFL Curriculum (2016) points out that competence in writing is a complex process, which involves several prerequisites, such as author's intention, desire to communicate and share ideas, vocabulary knowledge, organization of texts, identification and understanding of audience and purpose, and ability to manipulate the written "code". Taking into account these considerations, as a complicated process, it must be developed in a progressive manner during a learner's school year and beyond.

- **Initial Literacy:** Matsuura (2003) conjectures that "literacy is about more than reading and writing- it is about how we communicate in society" (p.1). Moreover, he claims that it has to do with social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture. As a fundamental aspect of quality education, schooling must convey self-sustaining literacy skills to every pupil. Since, literacy is a tool for learning, it is pivotal to take

advantage of literacy materials and methods that can enhance students' learning and strengthen their skills at the same time.

The Ministry of Education (2016), in the EFL curriculum, asserts that for most individuals, literacy events are part of daily life. Thus, "reading an email, receiving a birthday card, jotting down an idea, reading a street sign - all contribute to form the literate person" (p.23). It is noticeable that literacy itself takes many forms: on paper, on TV, on posters, that with the advent and increased access to ICT, has become a part of many students' contexts.

With respect to initial literacy, the EFL curriculum declares it can be problematic, even in L1. The fact that the writer is much more distant from the reader makes the writing more complicated. Additionally, initial literacy in a foreign language is influenced by several factors, which in the words of Cameron (2001), are the following:

- "The nature of the written forms of the first language;
- The learner's previous experience in L1 literacy;
- The learner's knowledge of the foreign language (in this case English);
- The learner's age" (p.134).

The four factors mentioned above influence to some extent initial literacy in L2, since students intend to transfer knowledge and their level of literacy from L1 to L2. However, it is not enough because learners need to develop understandings of new prompts in order to improve literacy in the foreign language. Furthermore, students need to develop reading skills if their expectations are to become literate users of English. Noticeably, the learner's knowledge of the foreign language also plays a substantial part in acquiring literacy in L2. In the Ecuadorian curriculum, it is indicated that despite the very few hours of EFL instruction, educators should focus on literacy and not just in oral communication. In addition, the key connections between the four macro-skills of English (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are fundamental to increasing the effectiveness of literacy work.

- **Text Production:** The scholar Penny Ur (2012), as cited in Ministry of Education (2016), proclaims that "the purpose of writing is the expression of ideas, where the ability to convey a message to the reader takes precedence over other aspects of writing" (p.24). Since writing implies communication of

thoughts through collaboration, it is treated in the EFL curriculum as a social practice that always has a context, a purpose, and an audience.

This curricular sub-thread of writing considers written production as a communication tool where ideas, knowledge, and information are transmitted. Similarly, the EFL curriculum in Ecuador intends learners express what they know and what they do not know through writing. Here, several cognitive skills are emphasized: analyze, compare, classify, deduce, relate, and interpret.

Ministry of Education (2016), indicates in the Ecuadorian Curriculum that

“Process writing encourages learners to think about and use language in a creative and critical manner. As students work through each stage in the process, from brainstorming to editing, they gain valuable insight into giving and receiving feedback and finding ways to express themselves clearly and effectively” (p.25).

In fact, educators should give special attention to the process of writing, this is essential to support learners in the enhancement of their writing skills. Similarly, it is suitable to ensure learners great opportunities to develop their own intentions as writers, to share ideas relevant to them, and to work collaboratively with others using innovative gadgets that facilitate the organization, arrangement, and editing of their ideas.

### **1.6. Assessment for Writing**

Writing assessment is a relevant element in bilingual education processes. In the case of EFL, Hyland (2003), posits “Without the information gained from assessment, it would be difficult to identify the gap between students’ current and target performance and to help them progress” (p.213). This way, the author acknowledges the urge to assess school goers in order to establish their educational needs and the extent of their progress. Likewise, Hyland presents five main reasons to evaluate students. Number one is ‘placement’, to assist teachers place learners in their corresponding classes and environments. The second reason is ‘diagnostic’, which serves to identify the strengths and weaknesses of disciples. Thirdly, “achievement”. The students can show what they have learnt and how their process of writing has improved during a length of time. The fourth reason is “performance”, which is to give information about how the students perform in different writing assignments.

The fifth and final reason is “proficiency” and this is meant to give a general picture of ability. There is no doubt that writing assessment is needed as the instrument that determines progress and quality in the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language.

For generations, pupils almost as a rule have followed the guidelines of educational measurement principles to establish assessment parameters, especially in large classrooms where the extended numbers of students prevent careful examination of written assignments. Hence, writing instructors are forced to accept the streamline of ministerial educational measurement principles in order to define the way assessment should be implemented. According to Lynne (2004) psychometrics, which is a branch of psychology in charge of the measurement of mental ability, constitutes a valuable resource for the assessment of writing. The majority of writing teachers resort to educational measurement theories at the moment of working with large size groups only to present statistically satisfying outcomes that praise the efficacy of the education policies. Pintrich & Schunk (2002) claim that setting objectives is the process of establishing a direction to guide learning. When teachers communicate objectives for student learning, students can see more easily the connections between what they are doing in class and what they are supposed to learn. They can gauge their starting point in relation to the learning objectives and determine what they need to pay attention to and where they might need help from the teacher or others. This clarity helps decrease anxiety about their ability to succeed. In addition, students build intrinsic motivation when they set personal learning objectives. Accordingly, Rosenholtz (1991) identified two types of school cultures; non-routine/certain and routine/uncertain. In the first type of environment, educators managed to work collaboratively involved in goal setting generating opportunities for professional development and maximizing students’ academic growth. On the other hand, teachers in the second group work in isolation, and they are not usually involved in school goal setting, and had fewer opportunities for professional development. Consequently, students’ performances were minimized. In view of the relevance of educational standards, it is hoped that Ecuador adopts standards of relevance in content, performance and the

opportunity to build a consensus on such standards, so that the educational actors in the nation work to reach coherent and unified goals.

### **1.6.1. Designing Assessment Tasks**

During the first decades of the twentieth century, considerable efforts to refine assessment methods became known. Nevertheless, such bounteous work came abruptly to an end by the early 1930's. That was in the opinion of Lynne (2004), a milestone in the history of writing assessment where the direct assessment of pieces of writing was replaced by indirect assessment of writing-related skills in the format of standardized tests. In other words, positivism had risen shifting from oral to written examinations. For a great deal of writing tasks, the designer of the writing assignment is also the audience and the evaluator. In the opinion of Reid & Kroll (1995), a designer-evaluator wants from student-writers to demonstrate specific knowledge and skills. Hence, the totality of test designers, designers of writing assignments have to consider the purpose with attention, the parameters and constraints, and the evaluation criteria for each writing assignment. A suitable strategy is to analyze both successful and unsuccessful writing across the curriculum assignments, in particular from the perspective of EFL writers, and offer suggestions that enable teachers to design and assess effective writing tasks.

Muñoz, Gaviria, & Palacio (2012) determine that the successful performance of learners on assessment tasks relies on the preparation and planning of those tasks performed by teachers and test developers. A paramount consideration at the moment of elaborating writing assessment tasks consists of defining the purpose (or discourse mode) for which students are instructed to write. Purpose is hereby understood as the intention of the writing and there are at least four purposes:

- a. "tell what happens (narrative)
- b. describe people, places, things, moments, and theories (descriptive)
- c. inform or share knowledge (expository)
- d. convince or persuade (persuasive/argumentative)" (p.48)

In order to accomplish the purpose of a writing task, students use a variety of genres or types of writing. The genre is referred by Weigle (2002) as the expected form or communicative function of the written product; which can be a letter, an essay, a laboratory report, etc.

### **1.6.2. Responding to Students' Writing Conventions**

Kautser (2010), defined writing conventions as a set of commonly accepted standards for written English. Conventions are crucial to make writing more readable. To put it in other words, the way things are done help the reader to figure out what the writer intends to say. As a general rule, writing conventions include spelling, which can smoothly guide the reader through the paper when there is correct punctuation; capitalization, grammar, and sentence structure, for purposes of paragraph organization and the use of smooth transition words. On this regard, Ritter (2003) explains that every writing style has its proper conventions. For instance, narrative writing requires the use of characters, setting and plot; descriptive writing should appeal to the senses through use of animated, imaginative, accurate vocabulary; expository writing should enlighten, define, or instruct, whereas persuasive writing resorts to a plot based on facts and logic, attempting to influence the opinion of readers.

### **1.6.3. Scoring Student's Writings**

According to Muñoz, Gaviria, & Palacio (2012), "it is important to remember that the scoring of a piece of writing should reflect the knowledge and abilities that students are expected to have at any specific level of proficiency" (p.14). In order to increase the value of assessment and reduce teachers' bias, a clear set of criteria must be recognized and then applied reliably to each learner's samples of writing. In this sense, a well-designed rubric can provide consistent writing assessment. Troia (2014) asserts that "rubrics serve to evaluate written products and provide feedback to students about their writing" (p.23). Effectively, a rubric is a guide that helps educators not only as a grading tool, but as a teaching tool, too. Since a rubric finds pertinent features of a piece of writing, these rules transfer expectations to pupils.

Remarkably, in the scoring of writing, teachers can set expectations in two forms: analytical and holistic rubrics. As reported by Bacha (2001), a holistic rubric gives an overall impression of the quality of the writing and a variety of criteria is used in order to produce a single score. In addition, this kind of rubric is useful for teachers at the moment of noticing what features have to be examined as they read. Undoubtedly, these descriptions are helpful because they give teachers notions of what aspects of a learner's writing should be criticized. On the other hand, Currier (2018) sustains that analytic rubrics

assign separate scores to each criterion and allow for a more detailed assessment of language skills. Likewise, the grading process in this type of rubric involves matching learner performance to certain levels under each criteria. For instance, poor, satisfactory, or exceptional, then adding the results to attain at a final grade. Some researchers argue that analytic rubrics are helpful for evaluating how different criteria are fulfilled and for calculating grades, but they can prove to be ponderous to develop and time-consuming to apply.

In fact, the effort educators make to guide their learners' progress in writing through frequent assessment of writing work is valuable to students' writing accomplishments. Moreover, such constant monitoring helps instructors immediately adjust their instruction for students. However, it is crucial that teachers keep in mind that the use of consistent scoring methods and attempts to authenticate their scoring judgment in an autonomous way play a central role to take advantage of the data generated in the grading process.

### **1.7. EFL Teaching and Learning Textbooks**

In recent times, a wide range of debates have been held regarding the English language teaching profession based on the essential role that English textbooks play in teaching EFL. Undeniably, school textbooks are by far the most widely used teaching materials in foreign language classes, and they constitute a key element in language teaching curriculum. For this reason, it is paramount that textbooks include fundamental elements of language and culture and above all, that they match the needs of the learners, cultural background and level of linguistic proficiency.

#### **Defining Textbooks**

Conforming to Hornby (2010), author of Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, a textbook is defined as "a book that teaches a particular subject and that is used especially in schools and colleges" (p.1600). In agreement with the given definition, EFL textbooks intend to provide students with necessary instruction that includes the development of language skills in order to prepare them to interact with individuals from foreign countries and different cultural backgrounds.

Brown (1994) also states that "the most obvious and most common form of material support for language instruction comes through textbooks" (p.136). In

expressing this, he emphasizes the significant part that textbooks play in the teaching of a foreign language. Richards (2001) declares that he is of the view that “Textbooks should be regarded as one of the many resources teachers can draw upon in creating effective lessons” (p.6). To accomplish this, the scholar suggests effective educators’ training so that teachers can adapt, modify textbooks, use authentic materials, and create their own teaching materials to support their language instruction. Similarly, Sheldon (1988) claims that, “these represent for both students and teachers the visible heart of any ELT programme” (p.237). In his understanding, this professor emphasizes that textbooks are the core of language teaching since eminent experts in the professional field of teaching have written them.

### **1.7.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Textbooks**

Despite of the prominent role textbooks seem to have in educational settings, arguments also have incorporated both the potential and the limitations of them through the learning processes and curriculum.

Richards (2001) points out the following advantages:

- **Structure and a syllabus for a program:** Textbooks are required, otherwise, a program may lack of a central core and learners would lack a systematic and well-planned syllabus.
- **Standardized instruction:** Without doubt, the use of a textbook in school contexts ensures that learners from different classes get the same content. Richards (2001), also claims that learners can be tested in similar ways.
- **Quality:** To Richards, if students use a well-developed textbook, they are exposed to undisputably tried and tested materials, on the base of effective learning principles, and paced properly.
- **A variety of learning resources:** Since textbooks include complementary material such as activity books or workbooks, CDs, CD ROMs, and complete teacher guides, they provide a variety of resources not only for educators, but also for students.
- **Efficiency:** Textbooks demonstrate to be efficient since educators’ time is saved, and educators are enabled to teaching rather than producing materials.

- **Effective language models and input:** It is evident that textbooks are of great help, especially for teachers whose first language is not English and for those who face difficulties generating accurate language independently.

- **Teacher training:** Richards (2001) suggests that in the case of instructors whose teaching experience is limited, a textbook complemented with teacher's manual can be used as a guide of initial teacher training.

According to Radic-Bojanic & Topalov (2016), "well-known linguists and authors such as Sheldon (1988), Hutchinson and Torres (1994), Cunningsworth (1995), Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and others share the opinion that textbooks are necessary tools for language teaching and learning" (p.140). These authors agree that textbooks help learners to not only to improve their language skills, but to become familiar with the cultures of individuals from foreign countries.

Nevertheless, Richards (2001) declares that there are also potential negative effects, hereto illustrated:

- **Inauthentic language:** sometimes textbooks are not representative of real language use, and exhibit inauthentic language that tends to be written only for incorporating teaching points.

- **Distortion of content:** In the thought of professor Richards, textbooks regularly show an idealized view of the world, or they fail to represent real issues that reflect the reality of the learners. To make them acceptable, controversial topics are avoided in these materials.

- **Lack of reflection on students' needs:** Since many texts do not reflect the interests and needs of the learners, adaptations are necessary.

- **They can deskill teachers:** Richards (2001) remarks that the role of the educators can become reduced if textbooks are used as the only resource of their teaching practice. Hence, it is fundamental that the educators consider other resources to make major instructional decisions.

To support Richard's conception, Radic-Bojanic & Topalov (2016) affirm that "researchers such as Albright (1981), Pore (1984), Cathcart (1989), Clarke and Clarke (1990), Carrels and Kiewit (1994) and Renner (1997), express contrary views, arguing that textbooks lack authentic texts" (p.140). They posit this because they consider that textbooks may produce misconceptions and

prejudices regarding individuals from other nations. Therefore, in their opinion, such teaching tools are not convenient for classroom practice.

Definitely, the opposite benefits and disadvantages the use of textbooks need to be taken into consideration. Thus, when there are textbooks used in a classroom which evidence some adverse concerns, immediate actions should be taken. Furthermore, educators are the guiders in the teaching and learning process; accordingly, they have to be aware of the significance of updating knowledge that provides adequate instruction to adapt, supplement, and use textbooks competently.

### **1.7.2. Principles for Using a Textbook**

Nunan (2003) has established several principles for effective use of textbooks. Next, some of them are detailed.

- **Understanding how textbooks are organized:** To Nunan (2003), it is relevant to become familiar with the textbook organization so that educators can prepare their instruction in the course of the development of the different units. Moreover, Nunan asserts that textbook organization is based on key features of language; which generally includes topics and related vocabulary, grammatical structures, and social and cultural interaction skills. The scholar also reflects that textbooks highlight two or more of the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In sum, he recommends that educators explore the textbook they are going to use to make important decisions while instructing learners.

- **Adaptation of the material:** Since no book can meet all the needs and interests of each group of students that uses it, Nunan expresses that a textbook must be adapted to their particular needs and purposes for studying a language level.

- **Preparation of the learners:** This principle supports the idea that any textbook activity can be successful if the learners are prepared to do the tasks and have the ability to work on them. Nunan presents two aspects regarding learners' preparation. First, students require the guide of the teacher to understand the content and purpose of the task; hence, they have a clear picture of why they are developing the activity. Second, it is advisable that learners understand the steps of the activity. Put another way, how to do it. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be enough to prepare the students. Nunan

asserts that they need to demonstrate in a verbal way or in the practice that they have understood their lessons.

- **Monitor and follow up:** In Nunan's point of view, while students are doing the activity, the role of the teacher is to monitor how well they are doing the task. As teachers circulate around the classroom, they can answer questions, and offer help when necessary.

- **Build a repertoire:** It constitutes a great idea to vary the activities, once learners are familiar with the basic presentation. To Nunan, it also means having techniques for enhancing what is there in the textbook.

### **1.7.3. Approaches of Textbooks used in Public High Schools in Ecuador**

In the last years, the Ministry of Education in Ecuador has taken a relevant educational initiative to improve the teaching-learning instruction in Ecuadorian public institutions. Accordingly, students receive textbooks gratuitously that integrate contents and activities appropriate for their age and that will help them to develop the holistic curriculum designed for each level of Education, that is to say, for the sections of Basic General Education and Baccalaureate. Likewise, the Ministry of Education (2016) has incorporated in the design of these English textbooks some core principles summarized as follows:

- **Communicative language approach:** The different tasks included in the textbook intend to emphasize the development of the four communicative skills rather than linguistic content learning. Moreover, the EFL curriculum in Ecuador has the goal of preparing citizens who are competent in the use of a foreign language for oral and written communication. Consequently, the activities are designed to engage learners in purposeful communicative interaction to make the learning more effective.

- **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL):** The Ministry of Education (2016), states that "this curriculum is based on a language driven CLIL approach" (p.35). Therefore, the activities in the book aim to integrate the learning of the language with cultural and cognitive aspects of learning; in other words, the content from other disciplines is used for meaningful language use. In addition, the EFL curriculum in our nation indicates that critical thinking skills serve as the mechanism for implementing the 4Cs framework (content, culture, communication, and cognition) that Coyle (2007), as cited in the Ministry of Education (2016), sees as a "conceptualization of CLIL" (p.346).

- **Thinking skills:** The different tasks and activities in the textbooks promote the expansion of thinking skills since the Ecuadorian curriculum expresses that meaningful interaction in a foreign language requires the application of communicative skills and perspectives through the integration of oral skills, written skills, comprehension, and critical thinking skills.

- **Learner-centered approach:** Taking into consideration that learners are individuals with different learning styles, personalities, and interests, as well as different levels of motivation, the EFL curriculum is flexible in the sense that educators are allowed to adapt the activities from the textbooks to satisfy the different needs of the students. Similarly, this curriculum assumes “a learner-centered teaching methodology in terms of how the content is delivered” (p.348)

#### **1.7.4. Description of the Textbook used by Second Baccalaureate**

##### **Learners at “Nueve de Octubre” High School**

Regarding the organization and structure, English B1.1 Student’s Book has six units in total, including a revision section at the beginning. It also has a Quiz Time section, which tends to measure the progress of learners after each unit. Similarly, this textbook has a grammar reference (Reflect on Grammar) and a Glossary that includes a list of words that will appear in the development of the unit. In addition, Glossary Activities are inserted to help pupils to consolidate vocabulary knowledge.

Moreover, each lesson contains guidelines prearranged in different stages; the last one asks learners to share a project, to be developed along the unit. The content pages list all knowledge areas in detail, including grammar, vocabulary, skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, the student’s book includes a workbook in the middle of the book. This workbook encompasses grammar, skills and strategies that reinforce Vocabulary, Reading, and Writing activities focused on the CLIL approach. Additionally, the English Textbook incorporates three test-training extensions. Each of the test training sections includes tasks that enquire about what students have learnt after doing two units. Thus, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing activities are presented to consolidate learner’s knowledge and increase their skills.

After reviewing the whole textbook, it is perceived that each unit has a similar structure. Therefore, it is observed that in the lessons number one and two, vocabulary, listening, and grammar are regularly offered. Meanwhile, lesson three presents pieces of reading followed by writing tasks. To reading and writing, some strategies are provided; however, they are detailed in a general way. The last lesson always incorporates colloquial expressions and guidelines for project presentation. After the four lessons, the textbook has either a comic short story or a game to entertain pupils in topics regarding the themes planned in the unit. At the end of the workbook, there is a list of suggested online resources for every unit. There are also grammar charts for every unit that wrap up the structures for better grammar understanding.

#### **1.7.5. Writing Tasks in the English Textbook-Level B1.1**

Hyland (2003), as cited in Asunmaa (2015), claims the paramount role of tasks for the writing learning process through the understanding of texts and integrated writing skills. Despite the relevance of texts as a source material to practice writing, the composition tasks students do by themselves turn out to help them acquire a more significant role in the teaching writing process. For better comprehension of the nature of writing learning exercises, Hyland categorizes writing tasks according to the areas of skills they are designed to improve: real-world tasks based on communicative goals and delivering a message, and pedagogic tasks focused on developing the students' composing skills or genre knowledge. Evidently, the selection of the type of task to apply depends on a thorough analysis of the educational needs to be satisfied.

The above-mentioned criteria have been considered by the team of authors, proofreaders and consultant reviewers in charge of structuring the writing activities in the student's book under analysis.

Every unit in the target textbook contains a lesson dedicated to writing activities. In general, these sections usually start with a review of terms related to the elements of writing, e.g. lead paragraph, headline, by-line, supporting details and so on. Then a piece of reading is presented to support the development of several subsequent writing tasks depending on the objective of the unit. Chapetón Castro, Nuñez Pardo, & Forbes, (2017), detail writing activities in the student's book. The first includes the use of quotation marks to

report what other people said; then, writing lead paragraphs in a short article providing a clear and concise overview of the main point. Next, the use of sequence connectors (first of all, second of all, in summary) to organize ideas in a text; after, writing short essays, biographies, arguments from authority and comparison and contrast essays; finally, the use of so and such to emphasize descriptions.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

In an attempt to assess the elements involved in the teaching performance regarding EFL writing instruction for second baccalaureate students, this study is focused on three domains. Firstly, the professional development of L2 instructors regarding teaching writing. Secondly, the attitudes and perceptions of learners in connection with the EFL writing learning process they are undergoing. Finally, the components of the writing tasks in the official English textbooks. The present chapter goes over the methodological principles as well as their enactment. Accordingly, the initial step consists of the discussion of the research design. Next, the research setting and approaches to sampling research participants are outlined. Finally, methods of data analysis, data collection techniques and instruments along with the process of collecting data and research ethics are described.

#### **2.2. Research Design**

As previously declared in the statement of the problem, the main objective of this study is to enhance the teaching-writing performance through the adaptation of writing tasks in the official second baccalaureate learners textbook. In order to achieve this objective, an action research approach was selected, it was deemed suitable due to its relevance. According to Mazimovic (2012), “action research may become an important instrument for improvement of educational practice, provided it is acknowledged and encouraged within the entire school system” (p.55). To this extent, action research seems to bring a new quality to the educational practice.

In the viewpoint of Ferrance (2000), “often, action research is a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement” (p.6). With no doubt, this type of research intends to assist educators in the development of solutions to challenge such educational matters effectively. Creswell (2012), as cited in Ivankova (2015), drew a parallel between mixed methods and action research because in both research

approaches quantitative and qualitative data are collected within one study. Therefore, this study utilized mixed approach, both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research was chosen to discuss the textbook writing tasks data collected from the observation checklist and students' survey. In order to support the qualitative approach, quantitative approach was also applied as the questions in the teachers' questionnaire (see appendix A), which were subdivided into Background Information and Professional Development, and whose responses were itemized and expressed in terms of numbers and percentages. Similarly, all questions in the students' survey (see appendix B) were ordered to express agreement or disagreement in the scale shown as follows: SA (Strongly Agree): 5; A (Agree): 4; U (Undecided): 3; D (Disagree): 2; SD (Strongly Disagree): 1.

Finally, the writing tasks from the textbooks were recorded in the observation checklist to verify their fulfillment (see appendix C).

### **2.3. Research Setting**

The data collection was carried in a thirty-day period from February the 1<sup>st</sup> to March the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 in Colegio de Bachillerato "Nueve de Octubre", institution founded in 1886. It is an emblematic secondary public school with four thousand two hundred and two students. It is located in Machala, El Oro in the urban parish of Jambelí, at the west side of the city.

This high school has a teaching staff of one hundred and twelve teachers with a permanent tenure and sixty-five under a labor contract. The administrative staff is a division with twenty-seven people in addition to ten workers in charge of the maintenance of the facilities. Added to this, there are forty-two classrooms, four computer labs, one auditorium and two meeting halls. There is also a six-hectare cultivation property for the students of technical baccalaureate in livestock and a semi Olympic-size swimming pool.

Proyecto Educativo Institucional (PEI) (2016), informs that large-scale trade is one of the main income sources of local families whose children are students in the aforementioned institution. Notwithstanding, the main economic activity in the area is generated by domestic work, banana crops and shrimp farming. A particular phenomenon is the fact that eighteen percent of the students come from families with one or both parents working in a foreign country and sending remittances as a supporting fee.

The sociocultural level of the majority of students is acceptable, since they belong to a middle-low class; therefore, their social and cultural standards are suitable for secondary studies. However, there are students whose social and cultural level drags the deficiencies implicit in a capitalist society. Consequently, such social injustice marked by economic differences generates unemployment, lack of education, poverty, exclusion and violence. (p.17)

#### **2.4. Source of Data**

Sources of primary data collected first hand for this study included observation checklists of the official English Students Textbook B1.1 for second baccalaureate learners, such source of data constituted one of the targets of the study through the analysis of the fulfillment of writing tasks set forth in all the six units of the textbook. Moreover, teacher's questionnaires and students' surveys also contributed to a large extent in order to analyze and interpret information.

#### **2.5. Research Participants**

After the identification of the major source of data, the next relevant task in this study was identifying the population and the participants. Therefore, Second Baccalaureate students and English language teachers of Colegio de Bachillerato "Nueve de Octubre" were identified as the population of the study. In the sense of that, they are directly related to this study. Said learners and educators were used as the context for this qualitative research.

The students were attending their education in two sections; morning and afternoon shifts. The student population under study consisted of ten Second Baccalaureate classes with an average of thirty-six pupils that totaled three hundred and fifty nine learners. It is appropriate to clarify that classes A and B were out of the study since they belong to the IB (International Baccalaureate) system, which has a different academic program.

The population of Second Baccalaureate students is depicted below.

CLASS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
C	18	19	37
D	14	22	36
E	19	17	36
F	13	24	37
G	18	17	35
H	13	24	37
I	15	22	37
J	11	26	37
K	17	20	37
L	12	24	36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>365</b>

SOURCE: THE AUTHORS

Remarkably, the amount of female students is superior to the number of male learners. Almost two thirds are girls (58.9%), and only a third are boys (41.09%). Paradoxically, INEC (2010), in the latest national census informed that the population of men was slightly superior to the population of women in Machala, El Oro. For that reason, such disproportion of gender might reflect a higher incidence of school absenteeism and dropout of male school-goers.

It is relevant to point out that the social status of students ranges from low to middle class as reported in the bio-data form filled by the parents, where they set forth their level of education and occupation.

In connection with the presence of minorities, around five percent of the students had indigenous ethnicity; meanwhile less than four percent were Afroecuadorian. Hence, a majority of over ninety percent of the learners were inside the ethnic classification of mestizos.

Likewise, a similar analysis was performed with the English teachers. It was found that in total there were twelve L2 educators, two male and ten female. Their ages ranged as follows: two of them were older than thirty and younger than forty; seven have an age over forty and less than fifty; one is older than fifty, and two are aged over sixty years old. Additionally, two English educators have a teaching experience of less than ten years; four of them have been teaching English for more than ten and up to fifteen years; and half of them, that is to say six, have a TEFL experience of over twenty years in secondary schools. With reference to the time of service at “Nueve de Octubre” secondary school, out of the twelve English teachers who were working in the morning and afternoon shifts. Besides, two of them had worked at the target institution

for more than three and less than six years. Four of them indicated to have been teaching at the target school in a term of no less than six and or more than ten years; one affirmed to have worked in the range from eleven to fifteen years; four told that they had been working more than sixteen and up to twenty years. Finally, two of the teachers recalled to have served at the institution for over twenty years.

### **The Eligibility Criteria**

The eligibility criteria that delimited the conditions individuals from the student population complied with in order to be included in the study as participants was as follows:

- To be legally enrolled in the second year of baccalaureate.
- To have attended class regularly.
- To make use of the learning material normally (textbook B1.1)

### **The Sampling Procedure**

Bras (2016), emphasizes that representativeness guarantees reliability and accuracy in a sampling procedure. Thus, in order to conduct the study, and to make the research economical and accurate, a sampling process was implemented.

### **Selection and Sample**

With regard to the selection of the representative sample among the total population, a simple random sampling method was chosen. In the words of Alvi M. (2016), every individual in the population has the same probability of being selected in the sample. Additionally, this author argues that the population has to comprise a finite number of homogeneous and individualized elements, as in the case of the research hereto. In this manner, the next step was to elaborate a list of all the student population, assigning each a number. Then, a random computer-generated table was used to select one hundred and fifty participants. (See chart below)

150 Random Numbers																			
327	033	101	065	269	018	147	286	060	021	307	166	229	233	221	256	152	104	153	004
094	088	199	225	244	187	359	105	054	303	178	194	336	174	206	302	014	159	252	164
069	257	052	044	238	110	230	133	161	340	163	240	198	325	304	102	253	064	009	341
063	180	282	071	345	051	215	179	023	036	261	041	078	134	061	280	342	346	335	010
170	217	267	118	207	202	313	338	358	300	114	219	167	058	292	308	091	288	319	056
032	272	006	182	183	012	157	351	128	344	151	275	276	354	312	079	322	120	008	082
123	096	176	294	037	090	100	165	328	137	150	015	059	192	248	175	035	002	005	353
028	284	331	022	136	321	315	068	357	017										

**Specs:** This table of 150 random numbers was produced according to the following specifications: Numbers were randomly selected from within the range of 1 to 359. Duplicate numbers were not allowed. This table was generated on 2/22/2018.

Source: Taken from <https://stattrek.com/statistics/random-number-generator.aspx>

In order to determine the sample size from a population of three hundred and sixty-five, the following variables were considered:

First, a confidence level of ninety-five percent; then, a confidence interval of six point one giving as a result a sample size of one hundred and fifty Second Baccalaureate learners from ten different class groups at “Colegio de Bachillerato Nueve de Octubre”.

The age of students who were included in the sample ranges from 16 to 18 years old. Sixty of them were male, making up forty percent of the sample population, whereas ninety were female, constituting sixty percent. Interestingly, the above-mentioned figures are very close to the gender amounts of the total population.

The data collection process took place during their English class with learners answering surveys.

With reference to the teaching survey, twelve educators of English from this school agreed to collaborate. All of them were working with a tenure; likewise, they were holders of a B.A. degree in sciences of education with a mention in English. One of them held a Master degree in educational management and another was a MaTEFL candidate. As expressed by most of the English teaching staff in the survey, updating training seminars and courses to teach language skills are a priority. For that reason, they were given a questionnaire regarding their background information and professional development. The purpose of this instrument is to gather information about their education and the time spent on teaching, as well as training in writing instruction.

### **2.5.1. Role of the researchers**

According to Postholm & Madsen (2006), two different paradigms function as the starting point and framework for research. These perspectives have been called the positivist and the constructive paradigms. Thus, Postholm & Madsen (2006), proclaim that in the positivist model, the role of the researchers was focused on capturing what has existed in the world and representing it empirically. However, with the constructivist pattern, researchers interpret the data and construct their beliefs within the framework of a social, historical and cultural context. Additionally, the above-mentioned authors claim that research based on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) denotes a third paradigm. In this paradigm, the researcher's aim is to recognize the participants' actions, and additionally to improve practice together with the research participants while research is being attempted.

On one hand, Glesne (1999), as cited in Postholm & Madsen (2006), argues that in the constructivist paradigm the researcher interacts with the research participants to recognize their social constructions and represent this understanding in a text. On the other hand, Engestrøm (1999), affirms that in the CHAT model, the researcher's role is emphasized not only in the interaction to understand and represent this understanding of a text, but in the creation of new ways of carrying out actions together with the local participants during the study.

### **2.5.2. Responsibilities of Research Participants**

As written in Research Gateway (2018), research involving human participants, often referred to as "subjects" may take place in different locations. Thus, it can be conducted by several educational institutions.

Certainly, participation in a study is voluntary and research participants can decide either to participate or not. However, if they agree to be involved in the research, some responsibilities are required. As explained in Texas A&M University (2018), such responsibilities include: to ask any question or doubt they have in connection with the study, to be committed to collaborate on the agreed dates of the study, and absolute truthfulness when providing data is paramount to validate the study.

## **2.6. Methods of data analysis**

Within the present research, two elements required attention: teaching writing performance and the completion of writing tasks in the English textbooks of second baccalaureate learners, in order to find out whether such tasks were completed and also relevant and authentic to them. Consequently, for this purpose, data were collected. The data gathered through teachers' questionnaire, students' survey, and writing task observation checklist were analyzed. The data analysis process consisted of a mixed approach that involves quantitative and qualitative methods.

### **2.6.1. Mixed Methods Research**

In the words of Dörnyei (2007), "A mixed method study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process" (p.163). Evidently, mixed methods have developed greatly and it seems that researchers are taking advantage of the combination of both, qualitative and quantitative research in order to collect and analyze data, as well as to cultivate a better understanding of a relevant occurrence.

It was 1970s when this innovative approach emerged, and nowadays, Dörnyei (2007), reports evidence that this form of research can "...open up fruitful new avenues for research in the social sciences" (p.163). Since this research method has grown in popularity, it continues to progress and develop. In addition, mixed methods research has greater possibility to provide further insights than with isolated research methods. Creswell (2009), ponders on the relevance of applying the advantages of the qualitative and quantitative methods together, instead of a study with the two methods separately.

Despite the fact that there are different aims to wonder why this kind of method is selected in general research, the main reason to justify such selection for analyzing the data of the study herein is providing a clear picture and understanding of the particular topic under analysis. Erzberger and Kelle (2003), as cited in Dörnyei (2007), compare mixed methods research with a jigsaw picture of many different pieces that need to be monolithically associated. Similarly, these differentiated types of research methods are able to provide a bigger picture of the object of study.

## 2.7. Data collection techniques and instruments

Researchers can use different data gathering tools. The selection of each instrument for data collection depends on the focus that the researcher aims at.

Thus, the present educational research utilized instruments and techniques chosen after the analysis of the problem in connection with the objectives that are detailed as follows:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Technique</b>	<b>Participants</b>
1. To analyze the background and professional development of English teachers regarding writing instruction	questionnaire	English teachers from “Nueve de Octubre” secondary school
2. To determine the attitude of learners towards writing tasks and their practice during writing activities in the textbook	survey	Students from Second Baccalaureate
3. To assess the teaching-learning writing performance when developing tasks in the textbook	Writing task observation checklist	Official textbooks from Second Baccalaureate learners

### 2.7.1 Questionnaire to Teachers

The present questionnaire was adapted from National Center for Education Statistics (2013). According to Meadows (2003), properly designed questionnaires assure the comprehension of questions and the legitimacy of answers from participants, as well as maintain the interest and cooperation of interviewees. However, Potter, Sharpe, Hendee, & Clark (1972), warn about

the complexities of using questionnaires for research because they might be misunderstood. Consequently, the popularity of the method is usually grounded on the inadvertence of issues associated to data analysis, bias, reliability, and validity of results.

The instrument in mention complies with the guidelines of a formal standardized questionnaire. In the words of Siniscalco & Auriat (2006), in this type of questionnaire, every participant is exposed to the same questions and the same system of coding responses. This is done with the objective of ensuring that differences in responses to questions can be interpreted as reflecting differences among participants, rather than differences in the processes that produced the answers.

These authors claim that standardized questionnaires are often used in the field of educational planning in order to gather information related to aspects of school systems.

The standardized questionnaire used here has two main sections, the first is focused on background information of the teachers detailing their age, level of education and classes they work with. The second section goes over items of professional development such as their concern and interest in teaching training courses, workshops, seminars or other type of events associated to language skills acquisition, especially writing skills.

### **2.7.2. Student Survey**

The current research instrument was taken from Tariku (2013). Surveys are a very traditional way of conducting research and they are commonly used to quantify the incidence of a specific condition. To Mathers, Fox, & Hunn (2009), “the survey approach is frequently used to collect information on attitudes and behavior” (p.5). In the same token, Mathers, Fox, & Hunn (2009) highlight surveys have an internal and external validity and using a random sampling technique they may recruit participants. Likewise, their flexibility can be combined with other methods to produce data.

On the other hand, Glasow (2005), expresses “surveys are capable of obtaining information from large samples of the population” (p.1). With no doubt, the sample is representative of the particular population under study and the findings produced may be generalized to the wider population. McIntyre (1999) as cited in Glasow (2005), asserts that surveys elicit data

about attitudes that would otherwise be measured inaccurately with the usage of observational techniques.

In this particular study, surveys aim to investigate the practice of students during their writing activities as well as their attitudes towards the writing tasks from their textbooks. To illustrate, they were asked if most of the writing tasks were familiar to them, if the writing tasks in the textbook encouraged them to work alone, or if they liked doing their writing tasks. The type of questions included in the survey were closed-ended questions where learners were required to choose from among a set of responses, such as strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD). Glasow (2005), declares that “closed-ended questions with ordered choices require the respondent to examine each possible response independent of the other choices” (p.2). In brief, these types of questions facilitate respondents to answer and researchers to analyze the data obtained.

### **2.7.3. Writing Tasks Observation Checklist**

The checklist was adapted from British Columbia Institute of Technology (2010). Burke as cited in Assessment, Articulation, and Accountability (1999), suggests an observation checklist is a tool used by teachers to monitor specific skills such as speaking and writing, or dispositions of individual students or all the students in the class. Accordingly, British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) (2010), states that “checklists are used for identifying whether key tasks in a procedure, process or activity have been completed. In other words, it identifies the presence or absence of conceptual knowledge or skills. It is thereby also asserted that the task may include a sequence of steps or incorporate items to verify that the correct sequence was followed. Remarkably, BCIT (2010) assures that a checklist itemizes task descriptions in a column and provides a space beside each item in a second column to check off the completion of the task. Through the use of the above mentioned instrument, a substantial sample of Second Baccalaureate learners’ official textbooks B1.1 was subject to analysis regarding the completion of writing tasks along the different units from the textbook. A sample number of 150 books were chosen randomly by the researchers in order to decide on necessary changes that innovate writing instruction.

The checklist in mention was prepared in question form (see appendix C). Therefore, in every unit of both sections: student's book and workbook, a question regarding writing tasks is asked and the answer is recorded in a table as "Fulfilled Task" or "Not Fulfilled Task". An extra column for observations was also added.

### **2.8. The process of collecting data and research ethics**

The data collection took place during the last weeks of the school year in order to enable the teachers to progress with the textbook contents and students to practice the writing activities. The study was entirely anonymous and the participants were aware of it. The School Principal at "Colegio de Bachillerato Nueve de Octubre", collaborated with the researchers and facilitated the conduction of the present inquiry. The aim of this study, as well as its crucial impact for enhancing teaching writing were explained to the school authorities. Mr. Armijos issued written authorization for the gathering of data from educators and learners. The authorization letter is attached in appendix D.

Pertinent information regarding the study was communicated to the participants before responding the questionnaires and surveys. The participants took part anonymously. The validity of the study relies on the large number of students from different classes of Second Baccalaureate. As for the teachers, they were differentiated not only by their gender but also by their teaching experience and level of professionalism. As stated, the method utilized in the investigation was a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, increasing its validity.

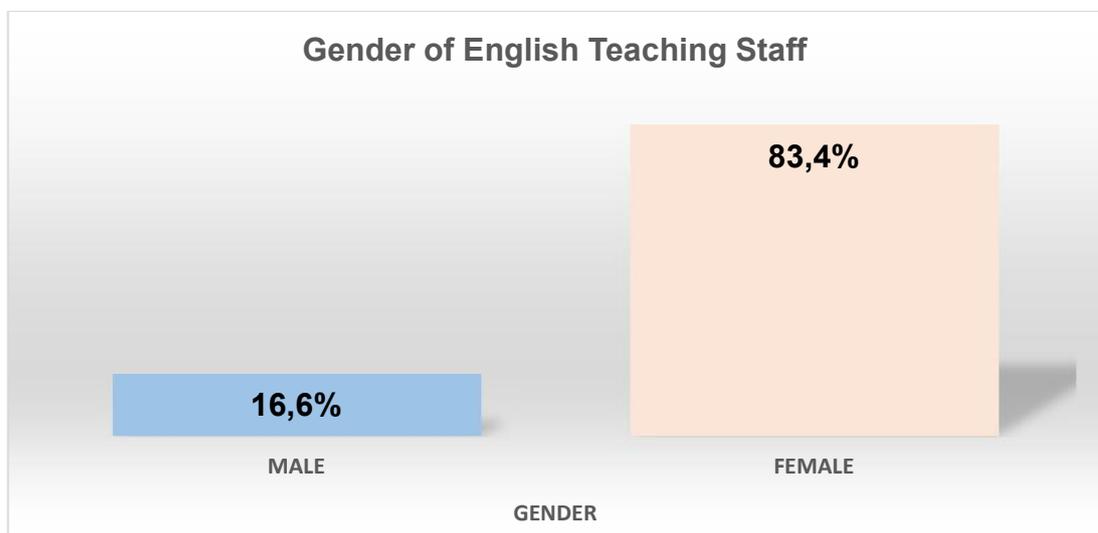
## CHAPTER III DATA ANALYSIS

### Introduction

This third chapter presents the analysis of the data gathered in the research carried out. Section 3.1 presents information obtained out of the teacher's questionnaires. In section 3.2, the summaries of students' surveys are presented and, finally, extracts from the writing task observation checklist are shown and commented in section 3.3.

### 3.1 Analysis of Questionnaire of Teachers

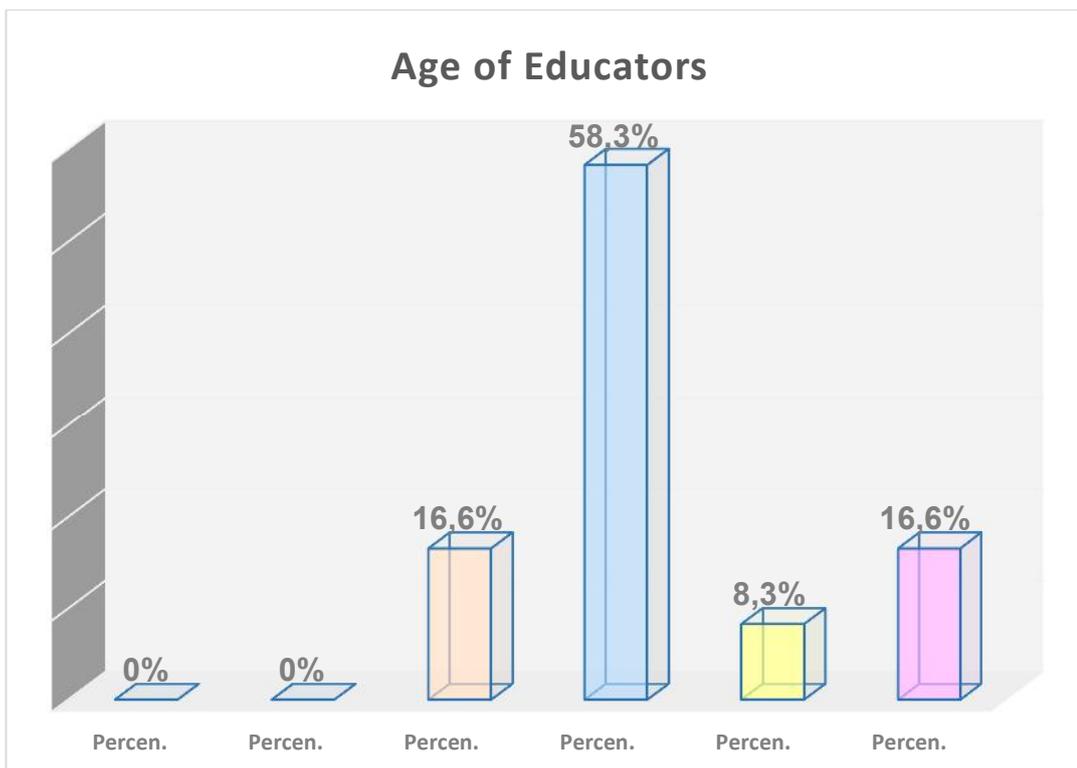
#### Teachers background



Source: The authors

**Graph 1: Questionnaire of Teacher – Gender of English Teaching Staff**

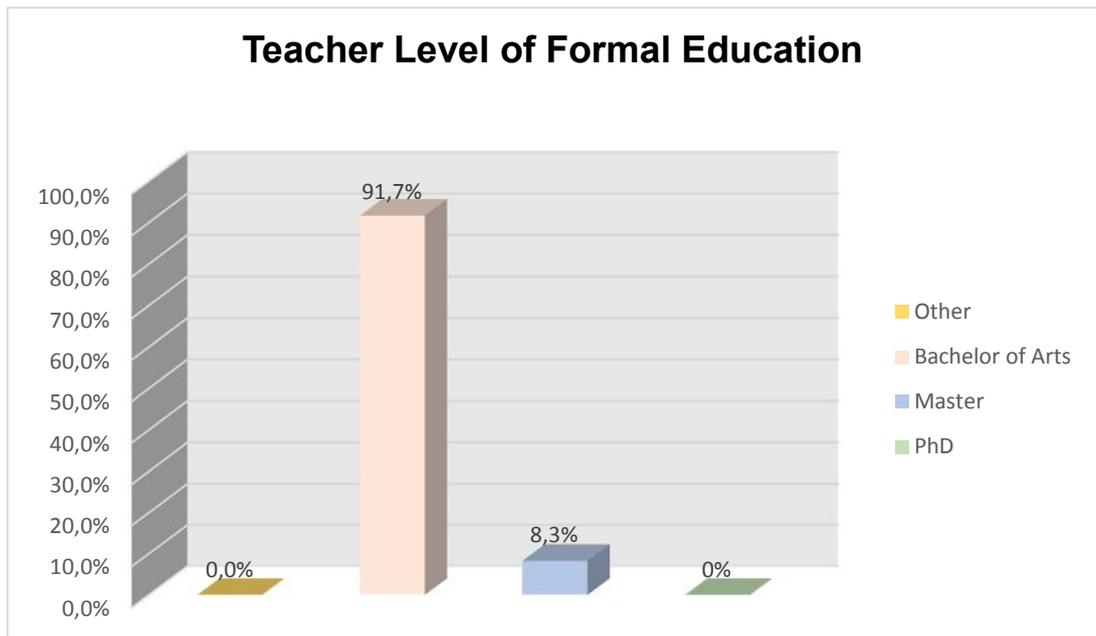
As seen in the graph, the numerical superiority of women is evident. There are five female educators for every male English teacher. Such correlation of higher female participation was also observed in the student population.



Source: The authors

### **Graph 2: Questionnaire of Teacher –Age of Educators**

In general, the majority of the teachers of English, namely three quarters, is under the age of fifty, one fourth of them is over fifty or sixty years of age. In other words, most educators are supposed to remain in their teaching positions at the target secondary school for at least the next fifteen years. Then, any intervention aiming to optimize the procedures they use when teaching writing would be of great help to the coming generations of learners.



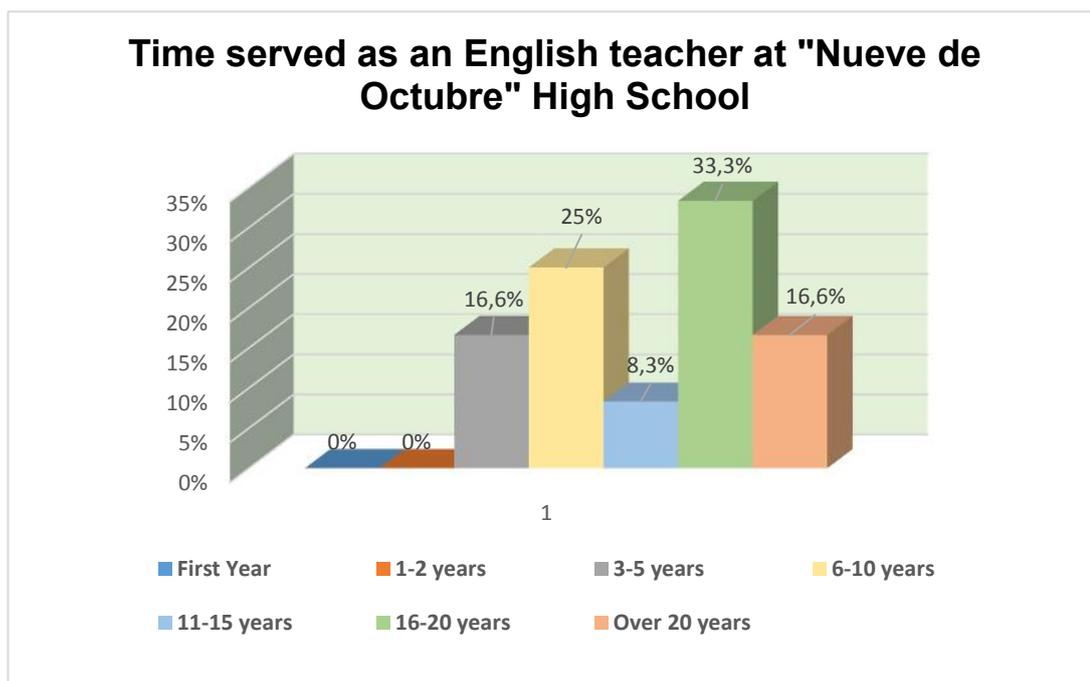
Source: The authors

**GRAPH 3: Questionnaire of Teacher – Teacher Level of Formal Education**

The first question in the Teacher Questionnaire focuses on the level of formal education of twelve L2 educators. The data gathered shows that all the teachers hold a degree of Bachelor of Arts with mention in English teaching. However, only one of them, that is to say 8.3% of the teaching staff has a Master’s degree in education management. In sum, English teachers are complying with the first and most relevant requirement of holding a degree relevant to the subject matter they teach.

To Richards (2005), teachers have different needs along their careers. Similarly, the needs of the educational institutions where they work also change over time. For that reason, there is pressure on teachers to update their knowledge in different areas such as curricular design, second language acquisition, composition theory, use of IT in the classroom and others aiming

to provide a major source for further professional development.

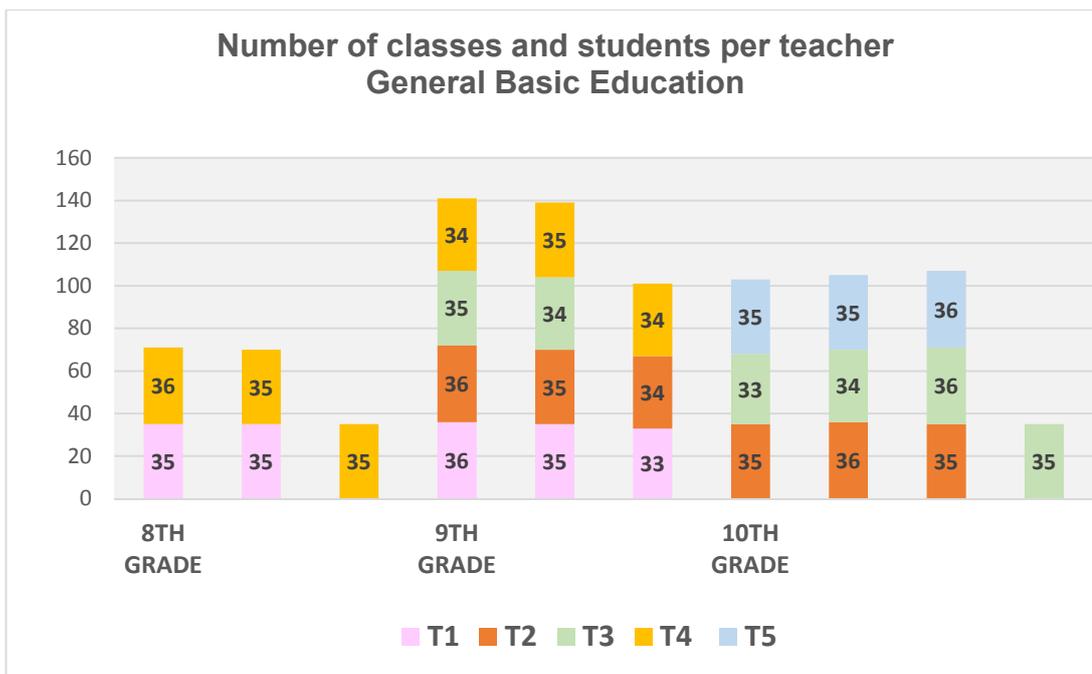


Source: The authors

**Graph 4: Questionnaire of Teacher – Time served as an English teacher**

The second question asks about the time spent teaching English at the target institution. As it can be seen, one sixth of the teachers have been a part of the English department for a time no less than three or more than five years. Besides, one quarter is situated in the range from six to ten years and less than ten percent occupies the band from eleven to fifteen years of labor. It can also be seen that one third of the instructors remarked to have taught English in the same school for over fifteen years, whilst two foreign language tutors, that is to say 16.6%, declared to have been teaching for a period of more than twenty years.

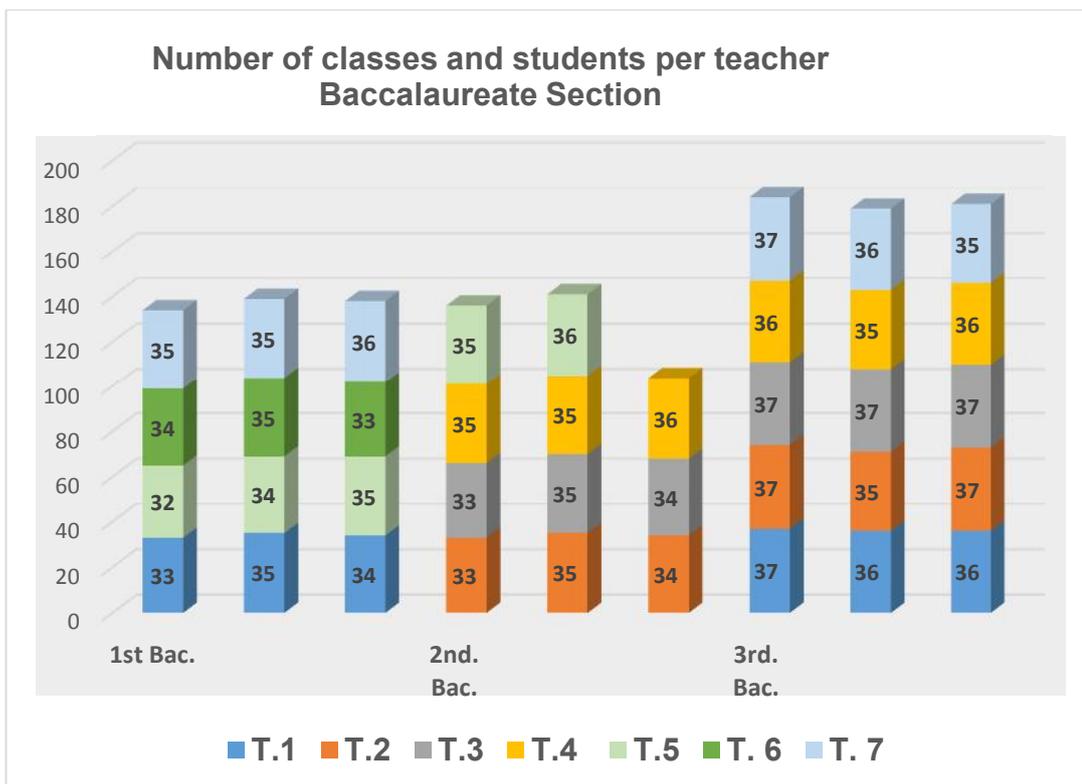
This information confirms the presence of a large majority of experienced L2 schoolteachers and the inexistence of novice educators. In this regard, Richards (2005) claims that any school or institution has teachers with different levels of experience, knowledge and skill. Such diversity requires the collaboration of the teaching staff to share knowledge and experiences.



Source: The authors

**Graph 5: Questionnaire of Teacher – Number of classes and students per teacher in General Basic Education**

There are five educators working with eighth to tenth graders. In average, each L2 teacher was working in the afternoon shift with six classes during thirty periods of forty minutes. One of them had five groups because as the head of the English department she used to perform administrative duties, while another teacher only was in charge of three classes in the afternoons, since he was working with three other groups in the night school. It is noticeable that the groups do not exceed a number of thirty-six learners per group due to an institutional policy that aims to a higher quality education.

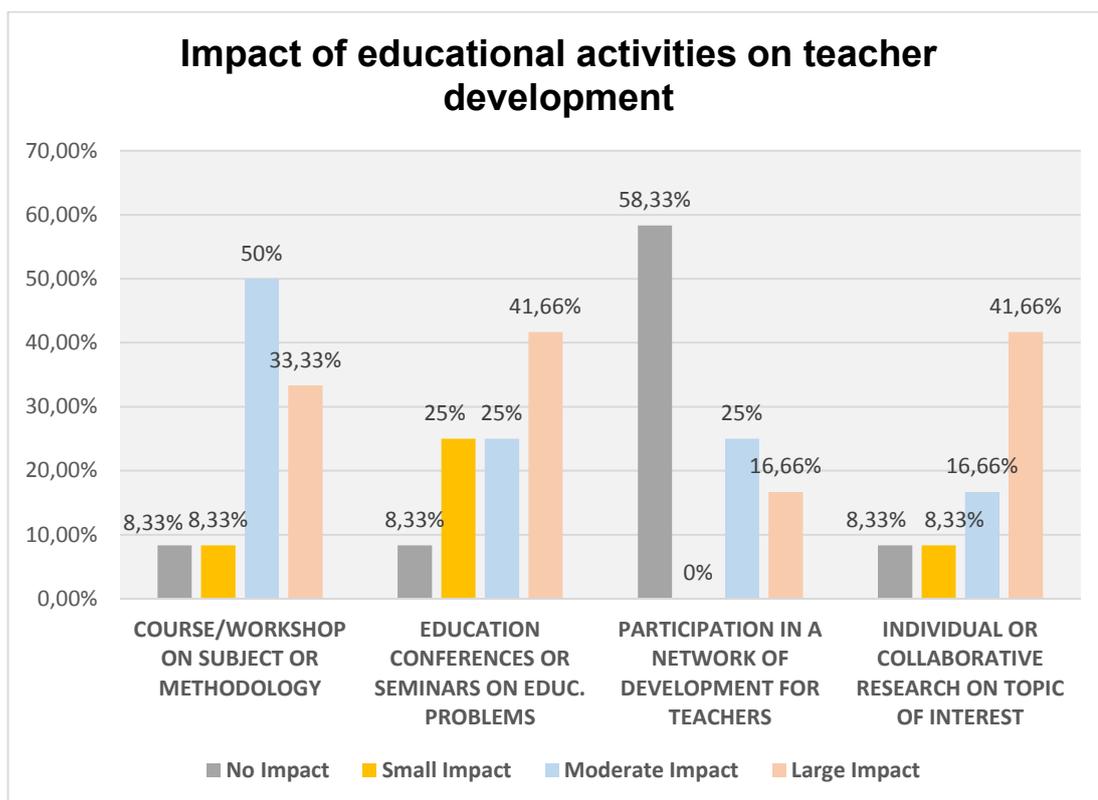


Source: The authors

**Graph 6: Questionnaire of Teacher – Number of classes and students per teacher in the Baccalaureate Section**

The Section of Baccalaureate is subdivided into three grades that attended to class only in the mornings: First and second years of Baccalaureate that have five periods of L2 class of forty minutes a week. In addition, the third year of Baccalaureate only has three periods of forty minutes every week. There are seven English educators, who were working twenty four to thirty hours of English. Since it is mandatory to work thirty hours, those teachers who do not have the full time in the English subject are assigned to teach a supplementary subject such as Research, Art or Student Engagement. Same as in the afternoon shift, there is a limit of thirty-seven learners per group to prevent crowded classrooms in detriment of the teaching-learning process.

## Professional Development



Source: The authors

**Graph 7: Questionnaire of Teacher – Impact of educational activities on teacher development**

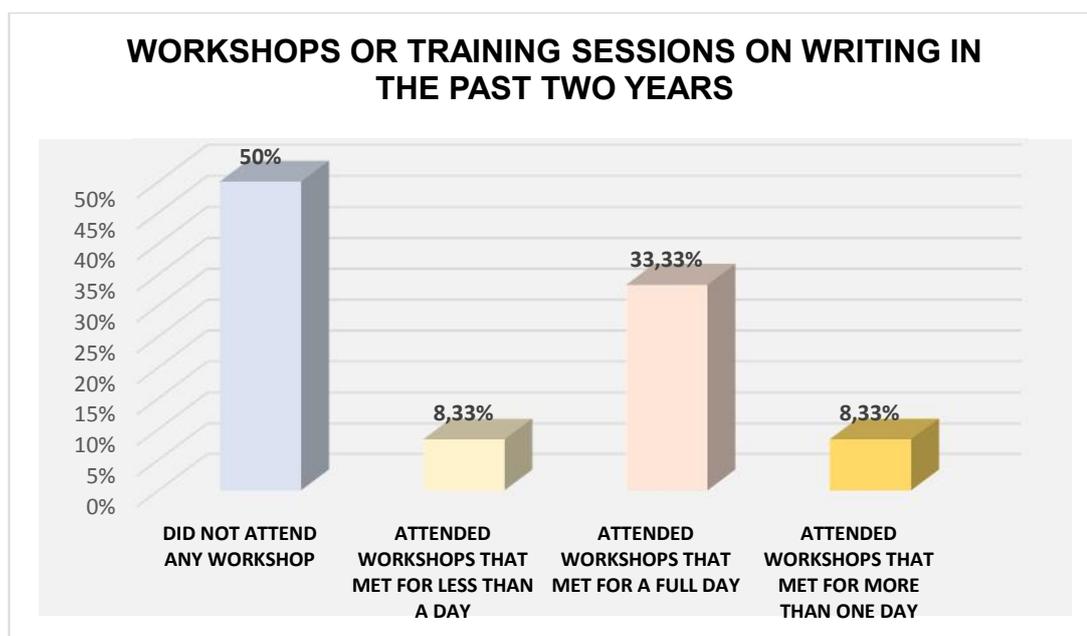
The third question compiles data about the impact on teachers from the different types of training for teaching development.

To start, educators were asked about the impact of English or methodological courses and/or workshops. Less than ten percent expressed that such events had no impact on their educational development, a similar amount replied that the impact was rather small. Half the teachers said that the impact was moderate and only a third of them reckoned their development received a large impact.

Another variable considered in the same section was the level of impact from conferences or seminars on educational affairs. Again, less than one tenth of the tutors stated that those events had no impact at all on their educational development; while one quarter confessed that they perceived a rather small impact and another quarter thought the impact was moderate. Finally, two fifths were pleased with the large impact of the seminars.

Next, participation in development networks for teachers was the topic; in this case, almost three fifths of the English tutors answered that this type of professional associations did not have any impact on their teaching development; one quarter reported a moderate impact and only one sixth believed it had been of great impact.

The last variable in this section was pertaining to individual or collaborative research on topics of interest. One of the tutors denied any positive impact; another checked the box of small impact. One sixth of the total had the opinion that the impact was moderate, but two fifths were confident in its large impact. In the opinion of Diaz-Maglioli (2003), the term professional development in education is elusive and contradictory, since many educators associate with in-service days and workshops. Meanwhile, for others, it refers to a process where tutors work under supervision to gain tenure or to enhance their professional practice.



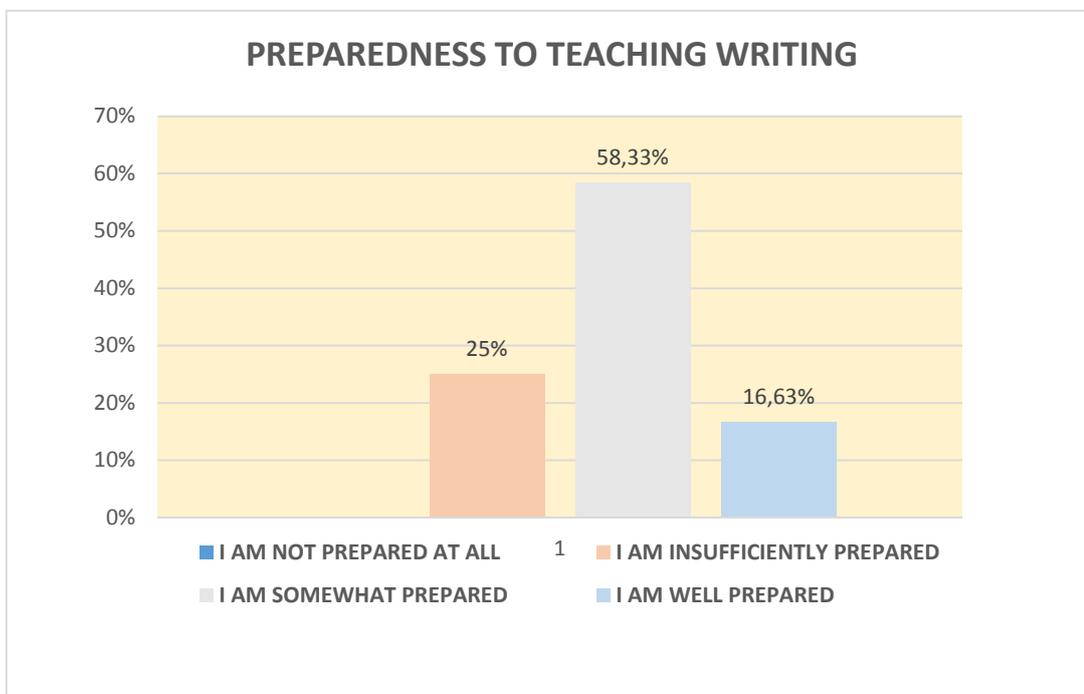
Source: The authors

**Graph 8: Questionnaire of Teacher – Workshops or training sessions on writing in the past two years**

Another question in the section of professional development dealt with the attendance to workshops or training sessions for English teachers within the last two years. In addition, the duration of the training events was accounted too.

Firstly, half of the English teaching staff admitted not having attended any workshop during the past two years; secondly, one of them mentioned to have been to an event that only took a few hours. In third place, a third of the teachers recalled to have been to events that lasted at least one day and finally, only one of the instructors recalled to attend an event that took at least two days.

The level of attendance of educators to teaching development events is directly proportional to the institutional policies. As stated by Richards (2005), “it is the responsibility of schools and administrators to provide opportunities for continued education and to encourage teachers to participate in them”, (p.3).

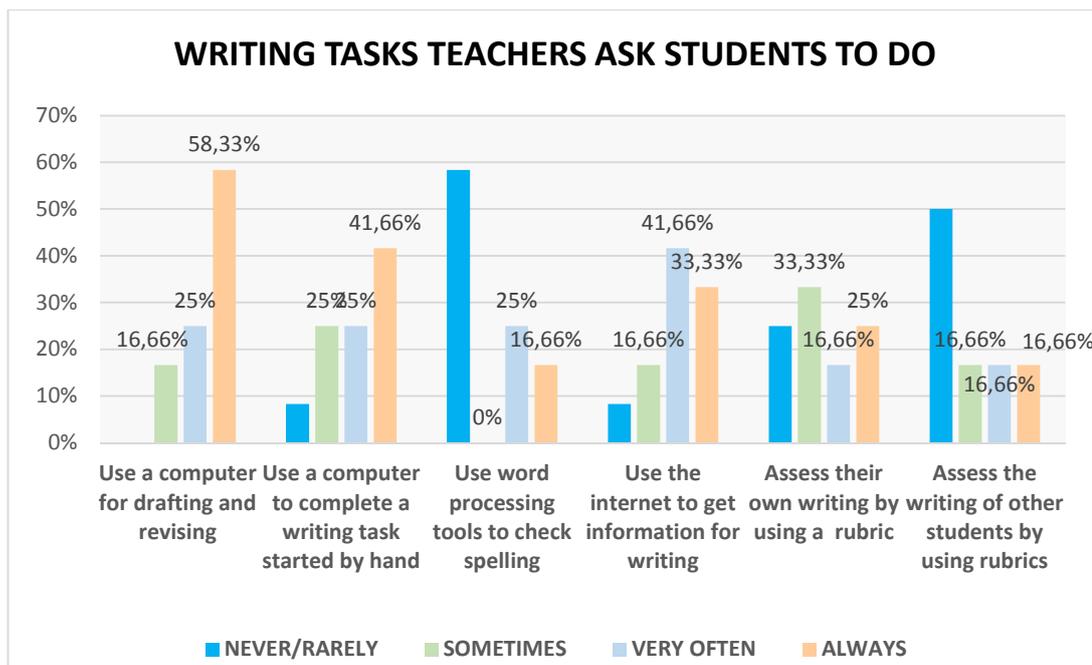


Source: The authors

### Graph 9: Questionnaire of Teacher – Preparedness to Teaching Writing

In the graph above, it is possible to observe self-perception regarding the level of preparedness to teach English at a secondary school working with a B.1.1 CEFR level textbook.

Interestingly, one quarter of the teaching staff confessed to be insufficiently prepared to teach English at the previously mentioned level. Moreover, almost three fifths of English teachers considered themselves prepared at some extent. Only two of the English tutors, that is to say 16.6%, replied categorically to be well-prepared to teach English at a secondary school level.



Source: The authors

**Graph 10: Questionnaire of Teacher – Writing tasks teachers ask students to do**

Another issue related to the professional development of a second language teacher is the use of either materials or didactic resources. The graph above displays the practices of English coaches with respect to the use of teaching resources.

To begin, the use of IT, namely computers, by students to revise or draft their EFL writing tasks was approached. One sixth of the educators mentioned that they sometimes had their students work in a PC or a laptop to prepare a writing task. Conversely, a quarter of the tutors said that they had their pupils use these resources very often. Admirably, two fifths of the respondents indicated that they always made their students use computers for such writing tasks.

The next issue was connected to the completion of hand-written activities with the help of computers. Less than one tenth of teachers replied they had not done it. Then, one quarter answered to do it sometimes, and another quarter of the tutors did it very often. Nevertheless, two fifths of the English teachers declared that they always resorted to this strategy.

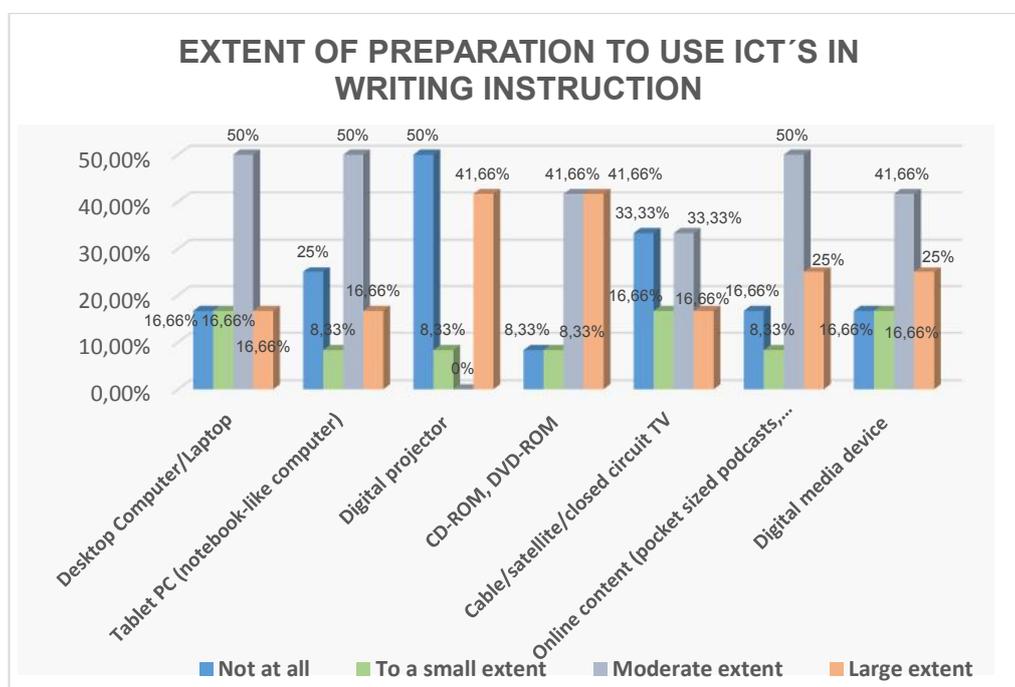
Regarding the use of the internet to obtain information for writing task purposes, nearly a tenth of the staff claimed that they did not resource to it. One sixth of them said that they sometimes used it. On the other hand two

fifths and one third acknowledged to have used the web very often and always respectively.

After that, the strategy of self-assessment of one’s writing with the help of a rubric was the topic in question. One quarter answered that they never use that strategy. One third of the teaching staff affirmed to do it sometimes. One sixth used it very often and one quarter of the instructors always used it.

The strategy of mutual assessment by learners was the last question in this section. Here, half of the teachers admitted not to be excited enough about working on online activities. Coincidentally, the other half of the instructors’ answers was proportionally distributed among the options of sometimes, very often and always.

According to Pennington (1996), research has shown that the use of instructional technology and ICT in particular in the English language classroom can improve and optimize students’ language acquisition and motivate them substantially to continue their learning and stimulate their creativity and passion. Technology in English learning is a synonym of variety and enhances the diversity of learning environments and opportunities towards obtaining an authentic learning experience.



Source: The authors

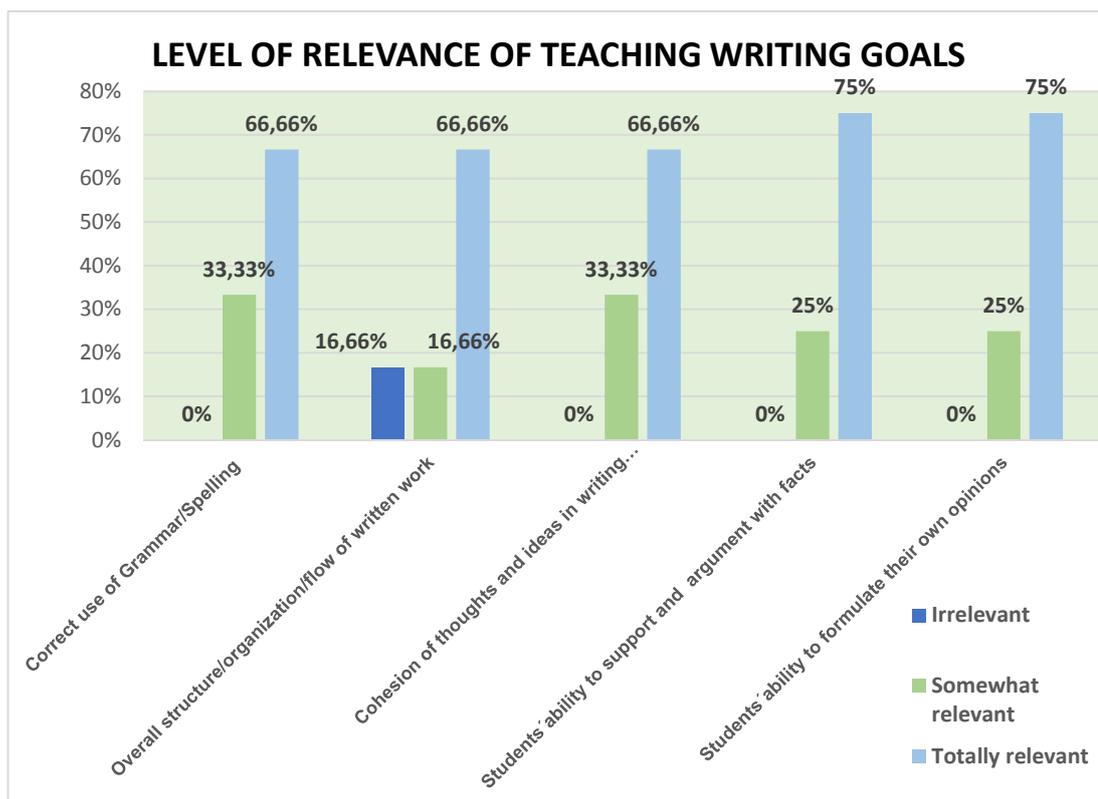
**Graph 11: Questionnaire of Teacher – Extent of preparation to use ICT in writing instruction**

The present set of questions deals with the dexterity in the use of IT tools by English teachers during their lessons.

The first two variables asked teachers about how well they could use computers, laptops, tablets or other gadgets for academic purposes during their classes. The answers matched one-half for the ability to use technology at a moderate extent and one quarter of the teachers could use them at a large extent. The next technological tool mentioned was the projector, which, in the words of half of the tutors, they did not know how to use. However, almost fifty percent mentioned to be able to use it at a large extent. To continue, the percentages on the capacity to use DVD-ROMs or CD-ROMs for teaching purposes were as follows: two fifths said they could use them at a moderate extent, two fifths indicated that they could use them a large extent during class, and the other two teachers described their ability to use them as poor.

In addition, the perception on the ability to prepare lessons that include the use of cable TV, online content or digital media to none or a small extent varied between one third to one sixth of the teachers, the moderate extent of ability of use ranged among one third, one half and two fifths respectively. Finally, the ability in large extent to use those IT resources fluctuated from one sixth to one quarter.

Samuel (2007), declares that training in ICT skills is crucial in implementing ICT integration in the teaching and learning of English and ‘the extent to which teachers are given time and access to pertinent training to use computers to support learning plays a major role in determining whether technology has a major impact on achievement.’ (p.10)



Source: The authors

**Graph 12: Questionnaire of Teacher – Level of relevance of teaching writing goals**

The opinion of the English tutors about the relevance of teaching writing goals is gathered in connection with five variables.

The first variable is the correct use of Grammar and spelling, one third of the educators thought it was somewhat relevant meanwhile the other two-thirds said it was totally relevant. The second variable is focused on the overall structure or organization of the written work. In this case, two-thirds of the teachers categorized it as an item of absolute relevance; the remaining one third was divided between the opinion of considering either irrelevant or somewhat relevant.

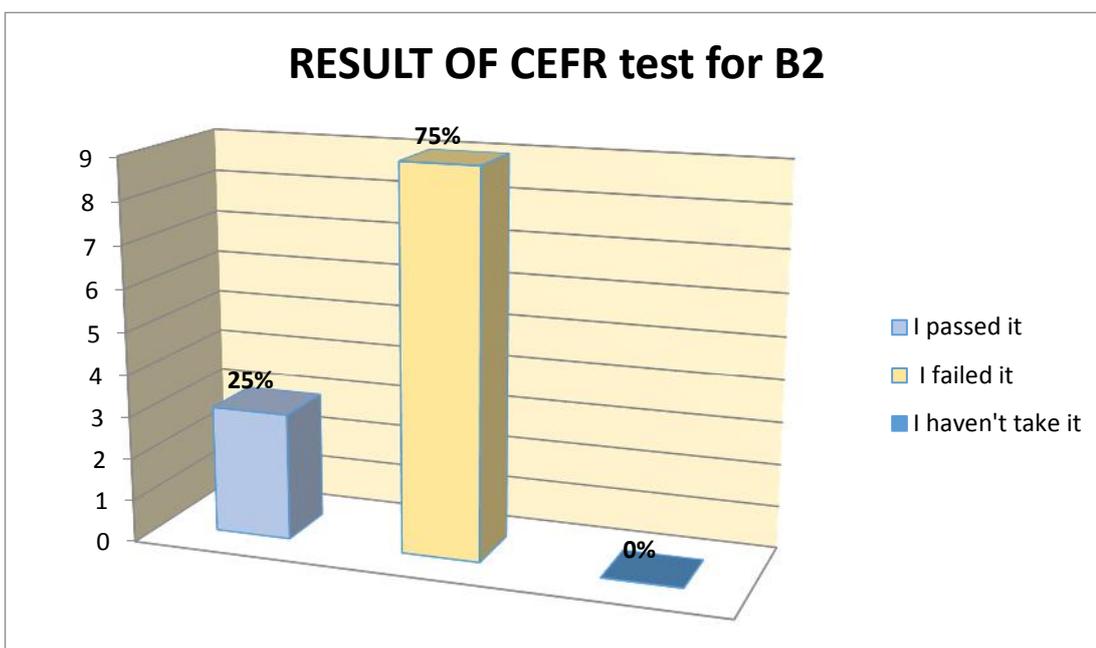
The next variable inquired about the necessity to have cohesion of thoughts or ideas in writing. Two thirds of the answers said once again that it was totally relevant and one third concluded that it was somewhat relevant.

The variable number four looks for information about teachers' opinion on students' ability to support and argument with facts. At this point, three quarters

agreed that it was totally relevant while the remaining quarter of instructors thought it was somewhat relevant.

In the fifth and last variable, the teaching staff expressed their attitudes towards the necessity to have students develop the ability to formulate their own opinions.

Professional development according to Sparks (2002), has gained relevance as the best route to ensure that educators succeed in matching their teaching goals with their students' learning needs.



Source: The authors

**Graph 13: Questionnaire of Teacher – Results of CEFR test for B2**

Finally, yet importantly, a sensitive question regarding the CEFR level of English of the educators was asked. Since the only way to certify it is by taking an international standardized exam, the question was directed to passing or not passing a test.

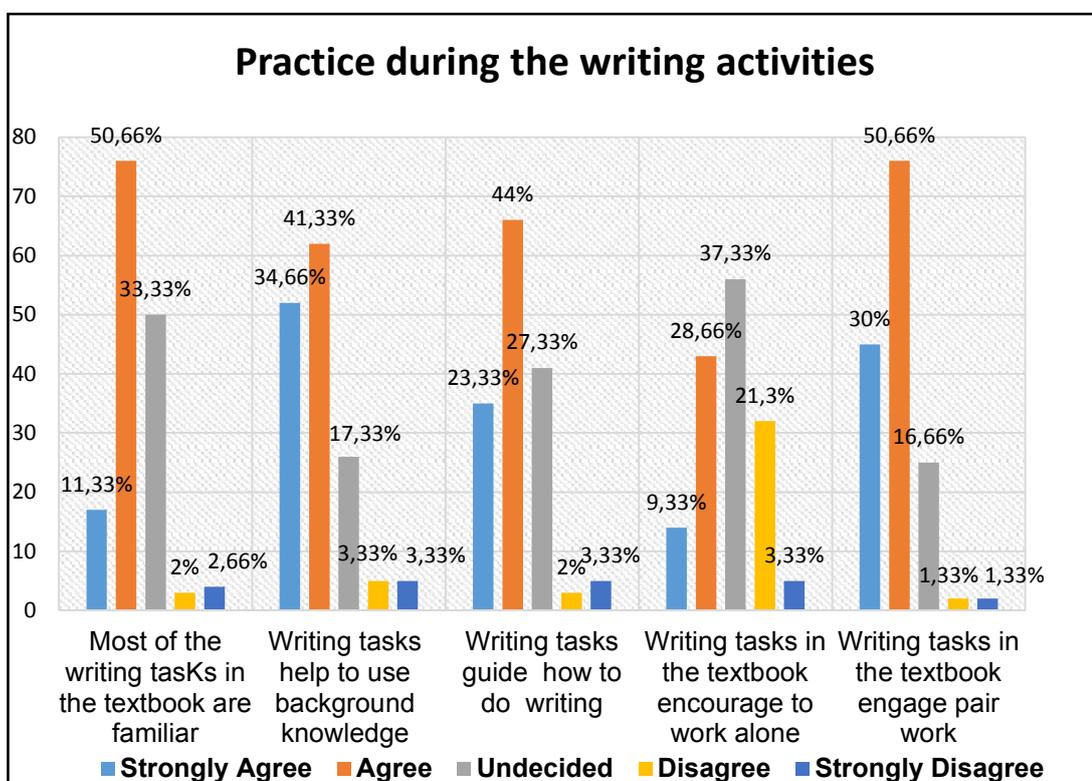
Only a quarter of the instructors had passed such examination and the other three quarters had not. Therefore, they did not have the currently level of English required by the relevant authority to teach English at secondary level. As British Council (2015) informs, in 2012, the government of Ecuador announced that English language teachers were required to reach B2. In doing so, the national government has been working with a private company to test the proficiency of all public sector English teachers. Besides, they claimed that training would be offered to those who do not meet the requirements. Finally,

the British Council estimated that currently, less than one per cent of public school English teachers were holding a level B2.

### 3.2. Analysis of Student's Surveys

This instrument describes students' reactions towards the writing tasks from the official textbooks B1.1 used at Colegio de Bachillerato "Nueve de Octubre" in the classrooms of second baccalaureate learners. The students' survey has two sections:

1. Attitude Concerning the Practice of Writing Activities
2. Attitude Concerning Writing Tasks on increasing Interest and creating Communication



Source: The authors

**Graph 14: Students' Survey, Practice during the writing activities**

#### Section 1. Attitude Concerning the Practice of Writing Activities

The purpose of investigating students' attitude towards the practice of the writing activities in their textbooks was to disclose students' perceptions and views towards their background knowledge implied in the tasks and how familiar the tasks were to them. Additionally, participants were asked to inform if the writing tasks were motivational and provided proper guidance to work individually, in pairs or in small groups.

As shown in Graph 11, one out of two learners admits that most writing tasks in the textbooks are familiar to them, meanwhile one third of them could not decide whether the writing tasks were familiar to them or not. Very few of the pupils denied familiarity with this type of tasks.

Lamonna Escher (2015) mentions the need of learners to construct knowledge in meaningful ways upon deep understanding of a topic. Therefore, the more familiar a task is to a student, the faster he/she makes the way to solve it correctly.

The next question was in reference to the helpfulness of the writing tasks in the textbook for using the background knowledge of the students. One third totally agreed whereas two fifths agreed. One sixth of the total did not make a final decision and a minority amount disagreed.

Beyer (1991) claims that every student brings knowledge to school on a variety of areas acquired through experiences in academic and real life. Thus, when writing activities in the textbook are compatible with the background of students, the opportunities to succeed increase.

The third question asks about the level of guidance of writing tasks so that learners start to write. Nearly a quarter of the students strongly agreed on that. Over two fifths believed that writing tasks were guiding along a writing learning process. Interestingly, another quarter could not make up their minds and a small amount equivalent to a twentieth disagreed.

Undoubtedly, writing tasks are designed with the intention of shaping learning on the process of writing and on the key content to write about. In other words, Doyle (1983) reports that in as much as students begin to understand what tasks lead them to do they will “acquire information and operations that are necessary to accomplish the task they encounter” (p.161)

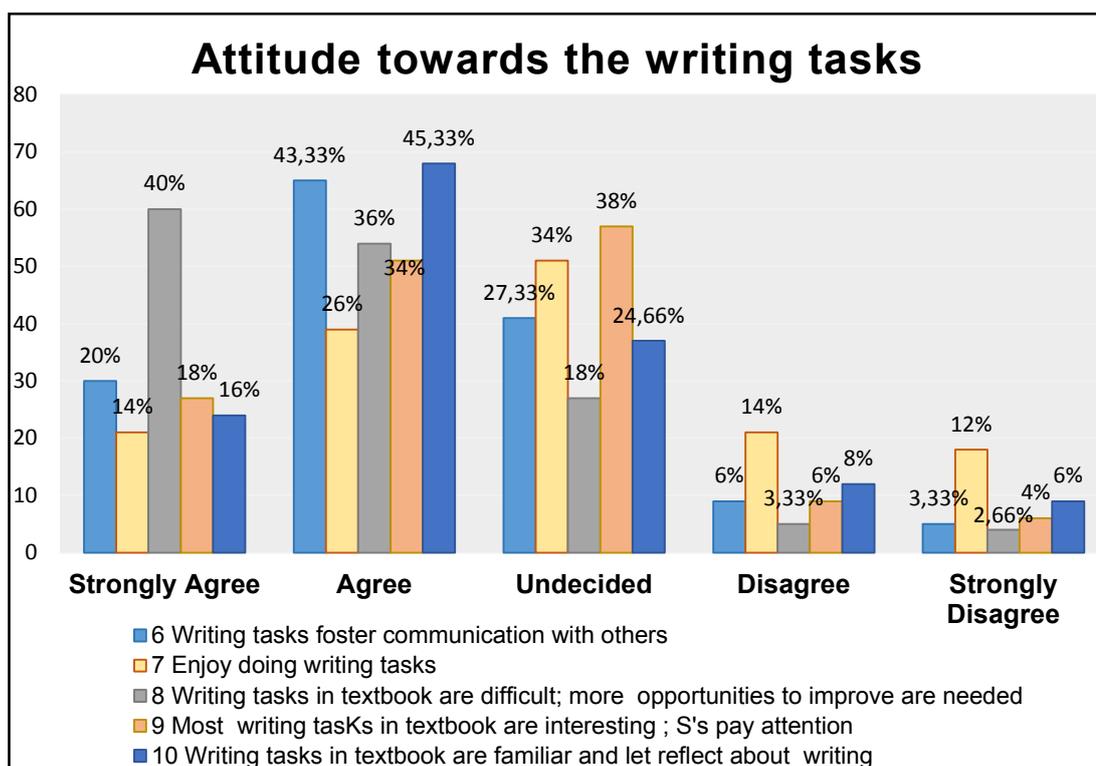
The question asking if the writing tasks in the textbook could encourage learners to work alone showed a different reaction compared to the previous questions. To start, only a tenth of the respondents strongly agreed; next, near a third agreed on the quality of encouragement of writing tasks. More than half of the participants either doubted or disagreed.

Writing alone is a synonym of independent work, when writing tasks raise expectation in learners to engage in elaborated communication, the result is

learners working alone. On the contrary, when there are no expectations for students to engage in elaborated communication, they might be despondent at the moment of fulfilling their writing tasks.

The final question about the practice during writing activities enquires about the feasibility to work in pairs on the writing tasks of the textbooks. This time, a third of the pupils strongly agreed. Besides, one out of two students agreed on the possibility to work in pairs during the practice of the writing tasks. In the end, a sixth of the students was not able to decide for or against it. To conclude, less than three percent disagreed.

Researchers in general favor the use of group or pair work, for instance, Storch (1999) sees pair work as a common teaching strategy that has widespread in education and it is highly promoted for both L1 and L2 classrooms.



Source: The authors

**Graph 15: Students' Survey, Attitudes towards the writing tasks**

## Section 2. Attitude Concerning Writing Tasks on increasing Interest and creating Communication

In the second section, the questionnaire items 6 to 10 intended to obtain data on students' attitudes regarding the writing tasks in the textbook to determine if learners reckoned the writing tasks were interesting, interrelated to their own environment and rich in communicative activities.

As shown in Graph 12, question 6 had the following results: one fifth of the students strongly agreed the task designs were making students communicate with each other. Similarly, one fifth agreed likewise. On the other hand, a quarter of the pupils were undecided on the communicative properties of the tasks. Moreover, around a tenth of the learners surveyed disagreed when asked if the writing tasks fostered communication.

Moss & Ross-Feldman (2018) maintain that even when lessons are focused on a reading or writing skill, more learning occurs when L2 learners are engaged in relevant communicative tasks within a dynamic learning environment than in traditional teacher-led classes.

Question 7 inquires about the level of enjoyment when doing writing tasks in the textbook. Less than a sixth agreed emphatically on it, a quarter expressed agreement at the moment of doing writing tasks. Almost one fifth did not come to decide if they enjoyed their writing tasks or not. Concurrently, a quarter of the surveys expressed their disagreement with the statement above.

Serra R. (2014) admits that one of the biggest challenges for teachers has to do with writing since learners are not usually predisposed to writing. Therefore, it is duty of instructors of writing to include suitable material and activities based on learners' preferences and writing tasks in order to lead learners to a state of enjoyment by the task itself.

In the next question, the issue of the level of difficulty in the tasks is asked along with the likely necessity of further opportunities to improve writing skills. In total, three quarters of the students agreed or strongly agreed on the difficulties of the writing tasks. Around one fifth did not take a side and a minimum percentage of 6% disagreed on it.

In the words of Gomaa (2010), writing is an intricate and complex task; the most difficult of all the language abilities to acquire. Mortuaga (2010), adds that English learners whose first language belongs to a different linguistic family are more prone to committing errors. For this reason, language teachers have to arrange relevant conditions to develop it.

Question 9 deals with the labeling of writing tasks of interesting or uninteresting as well as the corresponding level of attention depending on the level of interest raised in learners. One fifth strongly agreed and one third agreed on

that statement. Almost two fifths showed a neutral reaction and one tenth disagreed at different levels.

Lastly, the tenth question correlates the metacognitive reflection of learners on their writing with the amount of topics in reference to out of class student activities approached by writing tasks.

One sixth of the students affirmed that the writing tasks promoted reflection on their performance in the sense that they were related to extra class activities. By the same token, 45% of the learners agreed on the above-mentioned correlation. All the while, a quarter of the answers did not support or reject the statement. Finally, 14% of the answers were divided into disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement of correlation.

In this respect, O'Malley & Chamot (2001) define metacognitive approach as the set of strategies that involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, and self-evaluation after the learning activity is completed. Because of this, the association of out-of-class experiences to a teaching-learning process can strengthen the insights on writing tasks.

### **3.3. Analysis of Writing Tasks Observation Checklist**

The analysis in this section reflects on the fulfilment of writing tasks contained in the B1.1 official textbook used by second baccalaureate students along the 2017-2018 school year.

The following tables display activities of every unit in connection with their completion. According to Gavora (2014), "the result of a task execution is pupils' knowledge skill, attitude, interest, value and other outcomes of learning" (p.295); therefore, the task is by itself the textbook component that conducts students to learning results.

**Table 1: Unit 1- Breaking News (task completion)**

<b>Book Section</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Fulfilled task</b>	<b>Did not fulfill task</b>
	Read the article and complete the diagram on page 15	150 100%	0 0%
<b>Student Book</b>	Write a short article about the most recent event at school on page 15	94 62%	56 38%
	Read an article and complete timeline on page 13	122 81.33%	28 18.66%
<b>WB</b>	Create the last paragraph of the article on page 13 by taking into account the content of the text on page 12	92 61.33%	58 38.67%

Source: The authors

The first unit in the book has two integrated activities of reading and writing in the student book section, and two more of similar style in the workbook. In the beginning, the tasks in the student book were completed with no exception by the school learners, then, the level of fulfillment decreased to three out of five. Whereas, in the activity book, the first tasks in the activity were finished by four out of five, and then went down to three fifths.

Remarkably, it was observed that in the majority of textbooks, the tasks were simply checked, but not graded. Besides, only in a few books there was a correcting feedback regarding spelling or structure.

**Table 2: Unit 2 – Healthy Life, Healthy World (task completion)**

<b>Book Section</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Fulfilled task</b>	<b>Did not fulfill task</b>
<b>Student Book</b>	Identify the organization of an essay on page 27	32 21.33%	118 78.66%
	Identify sequence connectors used to maintain the connection between main ideas on page 27	36 24%	114 76%
	Choose one topic and write a short essay on page 27	23 15.33%	127 84.66%
	Complete the text using the connectors in the Word Bank and identify the main idea and secondary ideas to complete the chart on page 20	31 20.66%	119 129.33%
	Begin each paragraph with a sequence connector on page 22	28 18.66%	122 81.33%
<b>WB</b>	Choose one of the thesis statements, brainstorm three arguments and use this structure to write the essay on page 22	28 18.66%	122 81.33%
	Write logical thesis statements with the phrases given on page 22	28 18.66%	122 81.33%

Source: The authors

The second unit of the textbook included activities related to identification of elements of organization and connectors of main ideas. This time the range of fulfillment shown in the student book section fluctuated between two fifths and one quarter. Likewise, the proportion of task completion in the workbooks averaged approximately two fifths of the total.

The second unit presented tasks with a higher level of difficulty that require guidance of educators with a domain in organizational skills aiming to draft essays. As it was mentioned above, the large majority of learners did not complete them, and those who did it, had similar patterns of structure in their answers. Thus, it can be inferred that the writing activity was guided and the learners did not use their own ideas.

**Table 3: Unit 3 – What Lies Within Us (task completion)**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Activities Unit 3</b>	<b>Fulfilled task</b>	<b>Did not fulfill task</b>
<b>Section</b>	Make a synopsis of a previous reading by identifying the key content on page 41	139 92.66%	11 7.33%
<b>Student Book</b>	Write a short biography about a famous person on page 41	115 76.66%	35 23.33%
	Put the following biography in order by writing a, b, or c in the correct place on page 28	142 94.66%	8 5.33%
<b>WB</b>	Write the topic for each paragraph using the options given in the box on page 29	84 56%	66 44%
	Write a short biography about the person chosen in pg. 30 using information from the list (anecdotal information, factual information)	94 62.66%	56 37.33%

Source: The authors

The third unit is the last where writing tasks were completed. The exercises were focused this time on summarizing information from model texts. Surprisingly, a revival of the completion of writing tasks was observed. The ratio of task fulfillment in the student books was of over nine tenths initially; afterwards, it slightly decreased to three quarters.

As for the writing tasks in the workbooks, the warm-up exercise about putting in order biographical information was done by almost all the pupils: next, the level of completion decayed to less than three fifths and in the end, it closed with a percentage equivalent to three fifths.

The type of tasks related to biographies involve a work of investigation, in this case, the similarity of characters chosen and information provided leads to the assumption that only a few learners did their homework properly, while the others used them as a source for copy. Additionally, the level of complexity in the synopsis-based tasks was limited to moving pieces of information from a text to a list of items in the following page.

A number of situations prevented the English teachers to work with the other three units, first, a remodeling of the institutional facilities started in the month of December 2017, interrupting the classes. Besides, the students were

supposed to return in the month of January, but unfortunate incidents pressed the school authorities to finish the school year due to a lack of security in the facilities undergoing reconstruction. Altogether, seven weeks of class were missed in prejudice of the learners and the development of their productive language skills.

# **CHAPTER IV**

## **PROPOSAL**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAINING SESIONS TO ENHANCE THE TEACHING OF WRITING AT “NUEVE DE OCTUBRE” SECONDARY SCHOOL**

#### **4.1. Overview**

The primary aim of teacher training, according to Gustafsson (2003), as cited in Kárpáti (2018), is the development of educational skills articulated to instructional policies and the support for teachers to convey such policies. Gustafsson expresses the complexity of defining teaching practices of impact on learners' performance. Different teacher skills require different strategies, therefore, to make teaching strategies effective, several aspects such as age group, personality, learning ability or social background need to be considered. Certainly, competent and well-performing teachers are highly valued at any educational center in awareness of the time spent devoted to improvement and the positive attitudes towards this career. Regarding teacher training, research conducted by Joyce and Sowers (1988), as cited in Joyner & Reed (2005), concludes that “levels of teacher learning and strategy use are greatly increased when coaching, study teams, and peer support are provided” (p.1). Moreover, professional development is synonym of a systemic process that embraces the development of all individuals in the learning community.

In order to have learners progress in the development of writing skills, effective teaching is needed. As Guidance on the teaching of writing skills (2010) states, “It is crucial that the teaching of writing skills is carried out in a consistent way across the whole school” (p.4) This means that all educators should have reached agreement on the messages about required structure and content when they instruct learners. The present publication also states that it would be useful that teachers from the same educational institution and other schools share methodological strategies or pedagogical techniques in a mutual contribution of the teaching writing practice.

In view of the above mentioned aspects, training sessions in the teaching of writing would constitute a pivotal opportunity for English educators at “Colegio de Bachillerato Nueve de Octubre”, especially to promote confidence in using

innovative method, developing effective strategies to teaching writing in an authentic way, and adapting writing instruction to suit the learning needs of individual pupils.

#### **4.2. Current situation**

The present proposal concedes different suggestions on teaching training; such recommendations derive from the data analysis concerning professional development and teaching practice, where the requirement of teaching training and involvement in different educational activities was evident to improve teaching performance of English educators at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School.

Specifically, this proposal intends to improve the teaching writing practice so that EFL educators provide effective writing instruction and support learners to reach educational goals regarding writing abilities established in the English curriculum by MINEDUC (2016). In reference to the desired outcomes, a B1 user of English is expected to produce connected text on familiar or personal topics, as well as to write personal letters, emails, or notes on everyday topics, and describing events with sufficient accuracy and coherence to be followed most of the time.

In the words of Berry (1990), language improvement has a dual function, first, to increase teachers’ proficiency level and second, to provide effective teaching models when changes are required in teaching practices. Thus, it is paramount to emphasize that by enhancing teaching practice, teachers’ initiative will be fostered to further develop authentic and meaningful writing tasks that strengthen learners’ writing skills.

#### **4.3. Aim of the proposal**

- To optimize the teaching performance of English educators at “Nueve de Octubre” High School through training sessions that foster their teaching writing skills and increase their understanding to adapt writing tasks that suit the learners’ needs.

##### **4.3.1. Specific Aims**

- To manage a range of strategies and techniques to teach writing effectively.
- To integrate authentic writing tasks to the lessons with the support of an accompanying booklet.
- To strengthen confidence in the use of previously unfamiliar methodology.

#### **4.4. Educational context and target group**

Colegio de Bachillerato “Nueve de Octubre”, institution where the research took place, is a large state-based secondary school with four thousand two hundred students in three different shifts: morning, afternoon and the evening. Because of the size of the student population, every class has thirty to thirty six students. The institution is under the administrative venue of the Educational District number seven, which in turn, reports to the relevant authority at the Ministry of Education.

The trainees targeted to help improve their teaching of writing are twelve English educators of the aforementioned school. During the training sessions, the teachers are going to revise strategies for teaching writing that facilitate the adaptation of authentic writing tasks to the official textbook with the main objective of enhancing teaching practice and strengthening the development of writing skills in learners.

This will be the first time that teachers receive specialized training in the teaching of writing. Despite their wide experience in teaching English, they still struggle to deal with the implementation of innovative teaching strategies and techniques.

#### **4.5. Timing**

The training sessions will be held during four weeks, twenty hours weekly. Each week consists of fifteen hours of presence-based activities, plus five hours of autonomous work.

In addition, a carefully planned timetable of the event has been prepared.

#### **4.6. Design the Training Sessions:**

**Table 4: Agenda**

**Training Title:** Teaching-Writing Strategies for Enhancing Secondary School Learners’ Skills

**Location:** Colegio de Bachillerato “Nueve de Octubre”

**Date:** February 04 - February 22, 2019

**Time:** 09:00 am – 13:15 pm      **Number of weekly hours:** 20 hours

**Facilitators:** Margarita Mariuxi González Sarmiento and Eduardo Marcelo Luna Lara

**Expected Number of Participants:** 12

Week One	Monday Feb. 04	Tuesday Feb. 05	Wednesday Feb. 06	Thursday Feb. 07	Friday Feb. 08
9:00 - 10:30	<b>Introduction Ice Breakers Needs Analysis:</b> <i>Why should writing skills be developed? Round of reflection on Teaching Writing Styles</i>	<b>How to teach students the writing process:</b> Prewriting, Writing, Revising, Editing, Publishing	<b>Generating writing ideas in learners:</b> Brainstorming, Free Writing, Journalistic questions, Cluster mapping, Flow charting	<b>Teaching Paragraph Writing:</b> Topic Sentences Building a Topic Sentence using The sentence builder Strategy	<b>Ideas for creating a simple paragraph:</b> Four Square writing, Paragraphs with What-Why-How: (Chart)
10:30 - 10:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>				
10:45 - 12:15	<b>Foundations of Basic writing skills:</b> handwriting, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, sentence construction	<b>Strategies to implement the Writing Process:</b> graphic organizers, drawing, pictures, or lists	<b>Elaboration of posters and charts that include ideas generators:</b> Group work and presentation Selection of the best work	<b>Application:</b> Developing the Strategy “The Sentence Builder”	<b>Evaluation:</b> Multiple Choice Quiz on the themes covered in the week.
Autonomous work (1 hour)	<b>Extension:</b> Trainees will design a small set of writing conventions cards to	<b>Research:</b> Trainees look for additional strategies to be applied in the writing process	<b>Extra class activity:</b> Use one of the strategies to work on a given topic and e-mail it to a peer to	<b>Extension:</b> Use the chat group to post assigned topic sentences and demonstrate comprehension	<b>Extra Practice:</b> Trainees decide on a topic and e-mail the tutors their paragraphs

	discuss in the next session		exchange opinions.		using one of the revised strategies
<b>Week Two</b>	<b>Monday Feb. 11</b>	<b>Tuesday Feb. 12</b>	<b>Wednesday Feb. 13</b>	<b>Thursday Feb. 14</b>	<b>Friday Feb. 15</b>
<b>9:00 – 10:30</b>	<b>Writing motivation:</b> self-efficacy, writing apprehension, attitudes towards writing, interest, goal orientation	<b>Create an incentive to write:</b> Publishing Party	<b>Guidelines to use technology in the development of writing tasks:</b> General considerations	<b>Digital Stories to engage learners when writing:</b> Introduction to Photo Story 3	<b>Instructing trainees to use websites to enhance writing in learners:</b> <a href="http://www.booksie.com">www.booksie.com</a> ; <a href="http://www.futureme.org/">http://www.futureme.org/</a>
<b>10:30 – 10:45</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>				
<b>10:45 – 12:15</b>	<b>Hands-on activities to motivate learners to write:</b> Use of foldables to foster creativity in learners	<b>Gallery of Written Work:</b> Trainees present a sample of pieces of writing to share with colleagues their creations	<b>How to motivate students with technology:</b> Creating a class blog	<b>Watch a video (YouTube) sample of a digital story developed by a student:</b> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypvIRguXajQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypvIRguXajQ</a>	Exploring the websites to further practice <b>Progress Test to validate knowledge from week 2</b>
<b>Autonomous work (1 hour)</b>	<b>Practice:</b> Elaboration of a foldable of their own choice.	<b>Extension:</b> Find additional incentives for writing.	<b>Extension:</b> Educators visit blogspot.com to create their class blog.	<b>Application:</b> Trainees use the tool and create their own digital story	<b>Extension:</b> Trainees post their compositions in the analyzed websites

Week Three	Monday Feb. 18	Tuesday Feb. 19	Wednesday Feb. 20	Thursday Feb. 21	Friday Feb. 22
9:00 – 10:30	<b>Smart strategies to adapt writing tasks:</b> Use the textbook as a reference to adapt its writing activities	<b>Variation in textbook writing tasks:</b> Trainees are given tips on how to modify on purpose the material and activities	<b>How to use rubric to evaluate student’s writing:</b> Brainstorming of different types of rubrics	<b>Assessment when grading writing tasks:</b> Using color-coding to evaluate student writing	<b>How to provide feedback on student’s writing:</b> Techniques of peer-review
10:30 – 10:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>				
10:45 – 12:15	<b>Brainstorming adapted tasks to different reasons to write:</b> Slides are shown presenting adapted activities	<b>Analyzing level of difficulty to adapt tasks:</b> Trainers present adapted tasks for the different levels: lower, middle, stronger	<b>Modeling a Rubric to grade a personal narrative</b>	<b>Sample color-coded paragraph:</b> Trainers and trainees reflect on the strategy use.	<b>Final Evaluation:</b> Trainees demonstrate overall understanding of training topics
<b>Autonomous work (1 hour)</b>	<b>Extension:</b> Trainees select randomly a task from the textbook and adapt it in an authentic way.	<b>Practice:</b> Trainees perform the adaptation of a task taken from the textbook. (any level of difficulty)	<b>Extension:</b> Trainees apply a rubric to an essay.	<b>Extension:</b> Peers exchange pieces of writing and use the coding color strategy to evaluate their work mutually.	<b>Trainees e-mail the tutors with suggestions<sup>4</sup> for future training sessions.</b>

Source: The authors

#### **4.7. Methodology**

Attendance and punctuality shall be registered in every session, and only those trainees with an attendance of at least ninety percent will receive a sixty-hour certificate. Likewise, the extra-class extension and practice activities are essential to the success of the training.

Attendants shall be given a quiz every week and a final evaluation at the end for purposes of self-progress check.

The workshops are going to involve individual and cooperative work. The tutors using different grouping configuration techniques shall organize the distribution and number of attendants.

The participation of trainees through expositions, presentation of projects, interventions online or answers to questions during the event will be celebrated.

#### **4.8. Resources**

On one hand, tutors and trainees shall conform the human resources of the training event. On the other hand, teaching material shall include computer, projector, mobiles and relevant websites, paper, cardboards, pens, erasers, pencils, paper charts, markers of different colors, board and board markers, Post-It notes, magazines, scissors, glue and last but not least, the official textbooks and the booklet that contains strategies and authentic writing tasks for teachers to implement in their writing lessons.

#### **4.9. Development of sessions and activities**

##### **Week 1 (February 4<sup>th</sup>- February 8<sup>th</sup>)**

##### **Day 1**

To start the training session, a brief introduction shall take place, then; the following Ice Breaker will be performed:

Trainers ask the group to sit in a circle. Someone introduces himself/herself and saying one thing they enjoy, for example, 'Hello! My name is Eduardo and I love teaching writing skills". The person sitting next to the first speaker introduces oneself and says something else he/she likes doing in writing. After that, a self-introduction is done, for example, 'Hello! My name is Margarita and I think teaching writing can be complicated, this is Ximena and she loves teaching writing skills'. The game continues until each person is introduced.

After participants have introduced each other, a needs analysis takes place: teachers are invited to write down in Post-it notes the question: why should writing skills be developed? Participants' responses shall be posted on the board for reflection of the entire group. Similarly, a round of reflection on Teaching Writing Styles will be conducted.

The second item in the agenda is the foundations of basic writing skills, where educators shall receive instructional training regarding handwriting, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and sentence construction.

To affirm the knowledge, trainees will be asked to design a small set of writing conventions cards to discuss in the next session.

### Day 2

During this training day, trainers will prepare educators on how to teach students the writing process. The tutors are going to present slides shows with the following processes: prewriting, writing, revising, editing and publishing.

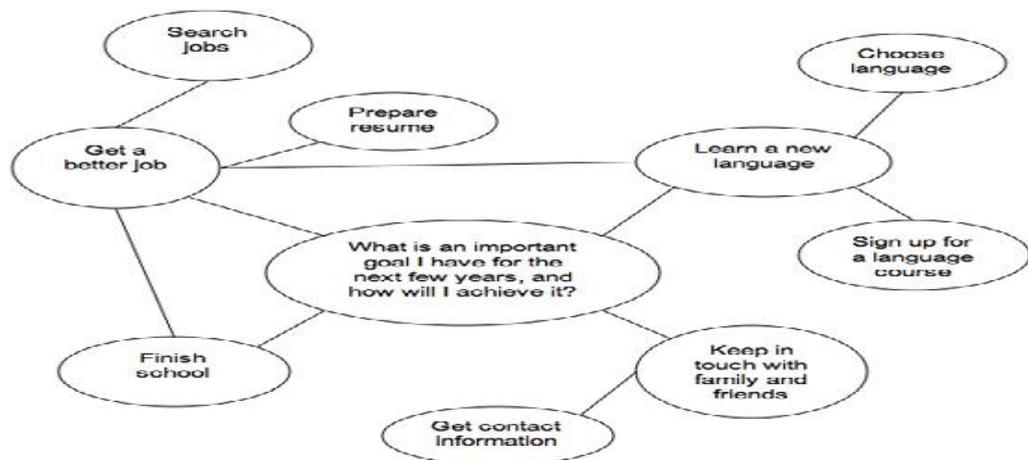
In addition, trainees will be strengthened with useful strategies to implement the writing process that will include graphic organizers, drawing, pictures, or lists, among others.

Before going home, a research task will be sent and trainees will have to look for additional strategies to be applied in the writing process.

### Day 3

On that day, the session will focus on the generation of writing ideas in learners, at this point; brainstorming, free writing, journalistic questions, cluster mapping and flow-charting will be presented and explained in detail.

**Figure 1 - Brainstorming**



Source: <https://writepaperfor.me/?rt=1H8T3MbT>

Afterwards, there will be an activity focused on the elaboration of posters and charts that include ideas generators. Trainees shall work in groups for their presentation. Finally, instructors will decide on the best work that will be exhibited in a billboard.

The extra class activity will consist in using one of the strategies revised to work on a given topic and then e-mail it to a peer in order to exchange opinions and consolidate learning.

#### Day 4

Instruction regarding teaching paragraph writing will be emphasized. Trainees will become familiar with the elaboration of topic sentences; it means they will be able to build a topic sentence using the sentence builder strategy.

**Figure 2 - Sentence Builder**



Source: Supreme Education Council

Trainees learn how to develop the strategy beginning with a blank chart and taking these steps: Write “S”, “S” and draw a light bulb. The first “S” stands for settings (where and when), the second “S” represents the subject and answers the questions (who or what is the information about?). To conclude, the light bulb is for the big idea (what about the subject and why is it important?). In the second step, sticky notes are posted to give information about the elements of the sentence to form. In the last step, after filling the bottom of the chart with several sticky notes, move different sticky notes with information about when, where, who, what, how, etc. to the black rectangle to build a sophisticated topic sentence.

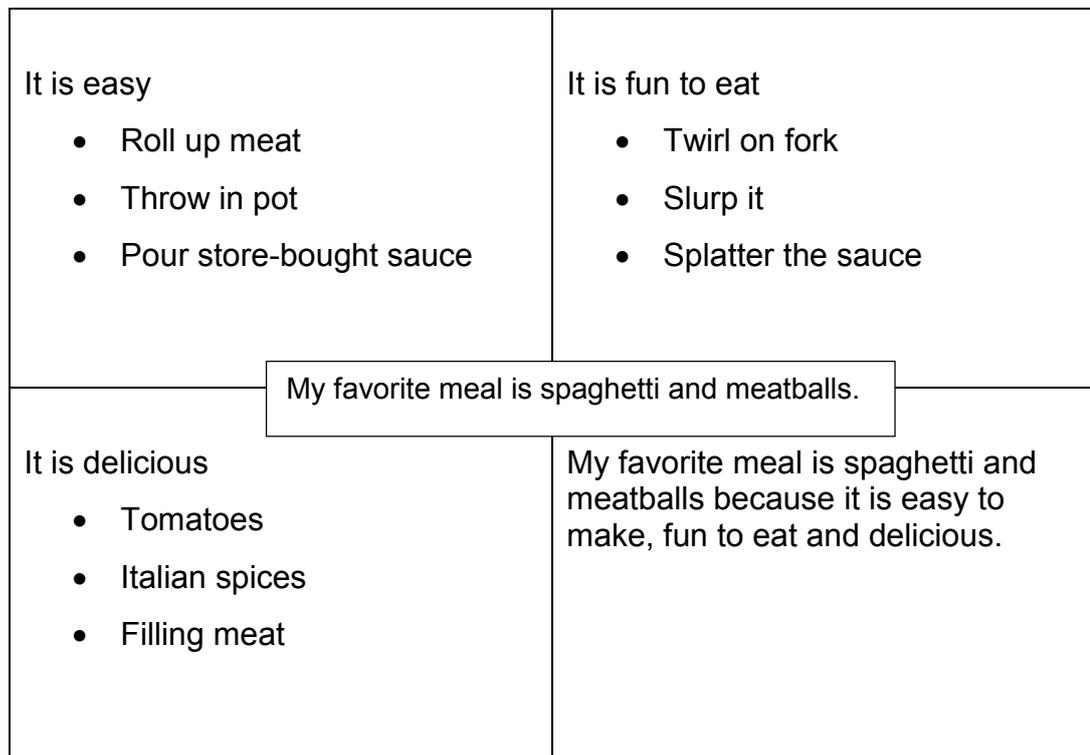
The extension after class intends educators to use a chat group to post assigned topic sentences and demonstrate comprehension of the training.

### Day 5

Ideas for creating a simple paragraph by using four square writing strategy and paragraphs with what-why-how are to be developed in a chart.

#### Figure 3 – Four Square Writing

The strategy works in the following way: trainees are asked to fold a piece of paper into four squares beginning with one well written topic sentence in the center, then add three supporting in each box and the fourth box should be a feeling sentence that sums up the other three. All the sentences should support the main topic in the center.



Source:[https://schoolweb.dysart.org/iplan/publicresources/00194\\_201006020945\\_DWA%20pro mt%20PP.pptx](https://schoolweb.dysart.org/iplan/publicresources/00194_201006020945_DWA%20pro mt%20PP.pptx).

**Figure 4 – Paragraphs with What-Why-How**

WHAT	WHY	HOW
I think dogs make better pets than cats for several reasons.	You can train them to do all kinds of cool things. Cats are almost impossible to train.	My dog can sit and fetch a ball or a stick, and he can even catch a frisbee in the air when I throw it.
	(Another reason...)	(More examples...)

Activities

Source: *The Writing Teacher’s Strategy Guide* by Peha Steve (2010)

Trainees are asked to build their paragraphs by moving from left to right across a single row. They need to start with the “What,” then move to the “Why,” and finally, use the “How.” They do not have to copy the words exactly. In fact, it is usually better if they make minor changes.

At the end of the week, trainers are going to give the first progress test to monitor the levels of understanding.

For extra practice, trainees decide on a topic and e-mail the tutors their paragraphs using one of the revised strategies. A timely feedback shall be sent in the next few days.

**Week 2 (February 11<sup>th</sup>- February 15<sup>th</sup>)**

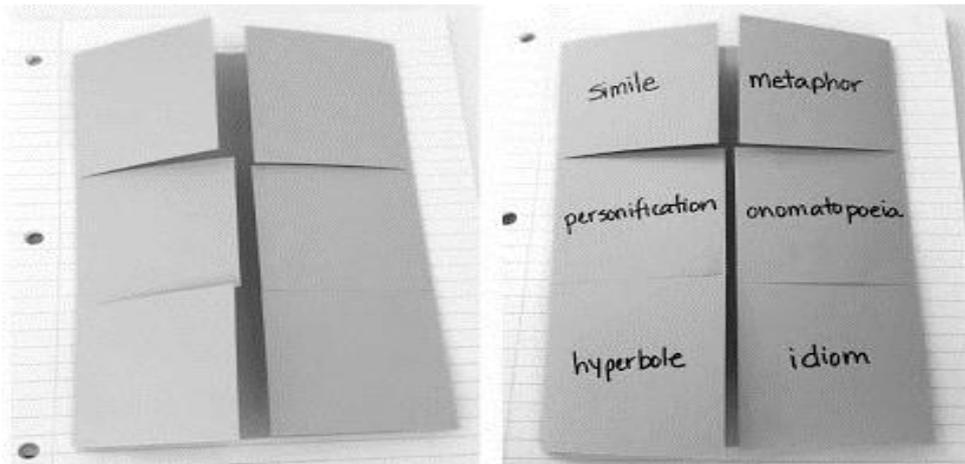
**Day 1**

The second week will cover writing motivation foundations such as self-efficacy, writing apprehension, attitudes towards writing, interest and goal orientation.

After the coffee break, hands-on activities shall be presented to motivate learners to write, for instance, the use of foldables to foster creativity in learners will be seen.

For autonomous work, attendants will be asked to elaborate a foldable of their own choice.

**Figure 5- Foldables**



Source: <http://www.uppergradesareawesome.com/2015/08/bright-ideas-no-prep-interactive.html>

At the beginning of the strategy, attendants will share their initial thoughts about the target words and concepts. During the practice, teachers learn how to practice and apply the developing of understanding of the new material. At the end of the practice, foldable makers are able to use them for review and assessment of concepts while keeping in mind the linguistic and cultural connections.

### **Day 2**

On that day, the creation of an incentive to write will be socialized, the Publishing Party. After a 6-week writing training, attendants will choose their best piece and all the people shall sit in a circle listening to each other's work. At the end, the audience will toast to the hard work with a small cup of soda. After the coffee break, a gallery of written work will be organized with trainees presenting a sample of their pieces of writing to share their creations with colleagues.

The extra-class assignment will consist of finding additional incentives for writing in different sources of consultation.

### **Day 3**

Instructors are going to share guidelines to use technology in the development of writing tasks.

Attendants will be instructed on how to motivate students with technology by means of the creation of a class blog.

Next, educators will visit blogspot.com to create their class blog and share it with their peers.

#### **Day 4**

In the training session, the creation of digital stories with the help of Photo Story 3, a freeware, will be approached to engage learners when writing and creating exciting video stories that can be uploaded and seen by anyone at any time.

For a better understanding of the strategy, a YouTube sample video of a digital story developed by a student will be watched and discussed.

The assignment of the day will be the making of video with the assistance of the above mentioned software.

#### **Day 5**

Tutors will be instructing trainees to use websites to enhance writing in learners, from the list, two will be addressed: <http://www.futureme.org/> and [www.booksie.com](http://www.booksie.com); the first is used to send emails to oneself in future periods of no less than a year, inducing reflection and retrospective. The second guides users towards the creation of pieces of writing in different genres.

A progress test shall be applied at the end of the second week sessions in order to validate knowledge.

As a weekend assignment, trainees will be asked to post their compositions in one of the analyzed websites.

### **Week 3 (February 18<sup>th</sup>- February 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

#### **Day 1**

The third and final week of training will begin with the presentation of smart strategies to adapt writing tasks; one of them consists of using the official English textbook as a reference to adapt writing activities.

Following, instructors will model several adapted tasks addressed to different writing reasons and slide shows will show the process of activity adaptation.

For further practice, trainees will select randomly a task from the textbook and adapt it in an authentic way.

#### **Day 2**

Trainees receive tips on how to vary textbook writing tasks through smart writing strategies. Trainers strongly recommend educators to analyze the level of difficulty when adapting tasks. Besides, trainers will come up with adapted tasks for the different levels: lower, middle and stronger, that match the level of the learners.

Thus, trainees will be asked to perform the adaptation of a task taken from the B1.1 English textbook.

### Day 3

Trainees are going to learn how to use rubrics to evaluate students' writing; to this extent, trainers will go over the different parameters that are included in this instrument.

With the background knowledge, trainees will be instructed on how to grade a personal narrative.

To conclude, an essay will be given to the trainees to evaluate it by means of a rubric.

**Figure 6 - Personal Narrative Rubric**

	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Organization</b> 	My writing has a <b>clear beginning, middle, and end.</b>	It is not always easy to tell what is the beginning, middle, or end of my writing.	My beginning, middle, and end are very unclear.
<b>Content</b> 	My writing <b>makes sense.</b> It has many <b>details</b> that help the reader imagine what I am describing.	My writing mostly makes sense and has some details.	My writing does not make sense and/or has few details.
<b>Quality Work</b> 	My work is <b>neat</b> and easy to read.	My handwriting is legible but could be better.	My work is difficult to read.
<b>Mechanics</b> 	All of my sentences have <b>capital letters</b> and <b>end marks</b> in the correct places.	Most of my sentences have capital letters and end marks in the correct places.	My writing is missing many capital letters and end marks.

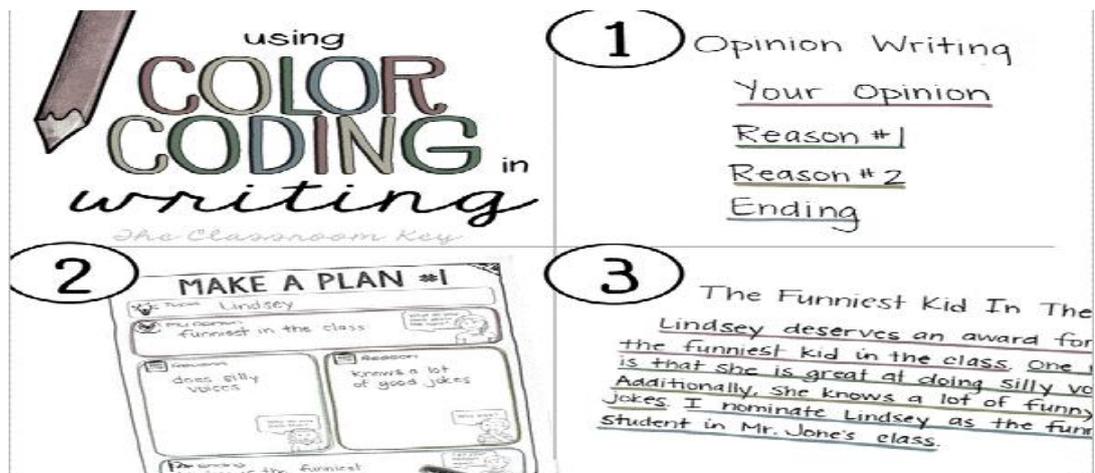
<b>Total</b>	
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Source: Braun Hannah (2015), the Classroom Key

### Day 4

Assessment when grading writing tasks is also a concern. Therefore, instructors will share with educators the use of a color-coding technique to facilitate the evaluation of learners' writing. Trainers and trainees reflect on the use of the strategy called sample color-coded paragraph.

Figure 7 – Color Coding



Source: <https://literacy.hallco.org/web/wp.../color-coding-strategy.doc>

The extra class tasks will require peers to exchange pieces of writing and use the coding color strategy to evaluate their work mutually.

### Day 5

During the last day of training, teachers are instructed on how to provide feedback on students' writing, with an emphasis on techniques of peer-review. Trainees need to be given the tools to make cogent and useful comments in peer group review sessions.

After having completed the sixty-hour training, the participants will take the final evaluation in order to wrap up the different topics reviewed.

As extension, trainees will be asked to email their perceptions and opinions of the training course. Suggestions will also be welcome by trainers to future training sessions.

#### 4.10. Assessment of the proposal

Since assessment is a continuous process, the proposal will be assessed at every moment the training sessions are being carried out. Teaching Writing Strategies support educators to perform better during their writing lessons. At the end of the instructional sessions, trainees will be given a set of questions in order provide feedback about the training.

Educators' feedback is significant to gain an idea of how effective the proposal is. Therefore, they will be asked the following questions:

- Which strategy for teaching writing did you enjoy the most?
- Which activity did you consider inappropriate or irrelevant?
- Which activity did you find complicated to perform it?

- Which training task did you find interesting and applicable?
- Which writing strategy did you find most attractive to motivate learners?
- Would you suggest taking or adding topics to the training sessions?

The proposal will also be assessed in terms of how it adapts strategies to textbook writing tasks to enhance the development of writing skills in pupils.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research investigated the strengths and weaknesses of teaching writing to students of the second year of baccalaureate at a state – based secondary school in El Oro province. Likewise, the scope of its attention was the level of fulfillment of the writing tasks contained in the official English textbook. The data collected revealed that the teaching writing performance has not attended the needs of learners, causing that only one fifth of them expressed to feel enjoyment while working on writing activities. With no doubt, the research instruments contributed to determine the aspects that need improvement for an effective development of the writing skills in learners.

In addition to the foregoing, the findings exposed that EFL teachers lacked preparation to develop the writing tasks in the textbook since they rarely attended training courses of professional development. Thus, data from the observation checklist determined the non-fulfillment of some of the textbook writing tasks, if completed; they mostly lacked a graded mark. Similarly, students who performed at an average did not receive proper feedback, not to mention the learners who needed feedback the most. Consequently, it is inferred that the educational challenges established in the National Curriculum Guidelines are not entirely met.

To conclude, innovative methodological strategies need to be implemented to develop writing skills in secondary school learners. Furthermore, the results showed that most writing tasks needed to be adapted into contexts that are more authentic to engage learners in the process of writing. It is likely that not all educators at Colegio de Bachillerato “Nueve de Octubre” are aware of the relevance of cultivating writing skills in the learners and still believe that traditional methodologies are adequate to foster the development of such productive skill.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To diminish the issues perceived regarding the performance of English educators when teaching writing skills, it is appropriate to provide some potential suggestions. Thus, based on the data analysis and the conclusions, the following recommendations are posited.

- Educators should consider updating their knowledge permanently. Enrollment on professional development courses should contribute to improve their teaching practice when developing learners' writing skills.
- Effective writing strategies should be implemented in the community of learners to foster enthusiasm and create motives to write.
- Educators should come up with adapted tasks for the different levels: lower, middle and stronger, with the aim of matching the level of the learners.
- Writing activities should be more stimulating with the use of technological gadgets, since it promotes learners interaction and support students to produce pieces of writing in a more authentic way.
- Teachers should also apply strategies that involve hands-on activities. When learners create their own materials to develop their writing tasks, their motivation is higher as well as their affective filter.
- Educators should consider assessing students' writings with the support of rubrics. However, when using this instrument, it is significant to explain pupils how their writing will be scored.
- Teachers should consider providing feedback, since learners can expect a fair, honest, and constructive appraisal of their writing, not only from their teachers, but from also from their peers.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A

#### Questionnaire to Teachers

## English Teachers Questionnaire

### Background Information

These questions are about you, your education and the time you have spent in teaching. Please mark the appropriate box.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

How old are you?

- Under 25
- 25-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 +

What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?

- PhD
- Master's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Other

How long have you been working as an English teacher?

- This is my first year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

How long have you been working as a teacher at "Nueve de Octubre" High School?

- This is my first year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

What is your status as a teacher at this school?

- Permanent tenure
- Provisional tenure

Which grades do you teach?

	8th Year of Basic Education	9th Year of Basic Education	10th Year of Basic Education	1st Year of Baccalaureate	2nd Year of Baccalaureate	3rd Year of Baccalaureate
EGB	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baccalaureate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is the average number of students in your English classes?

- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40 +

## Professional Development

In this survey, professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher.

Please only consider professional development you have taken after your initial English teacher training/education.

In the last two years, have you participated in any of the following kinds of professional development activities? If your answer is YES, What was the impact of these activities on your development as an English teacher?

	No impact	A small impact	A moderate impact	A large impact
Courses/workshops (e.g. on subject matter or methods and/or other education-related topics)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education conferences or seminars (where teachers and/or researchers present their research results and discuss educational problems)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in a network of teachers formed specifically for the professional development of teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thinking of your own professional development needs, please indicate the extent to which you have such needs in each of the areas listed. Please mark one choice in each row.

	Not need at all	Low level of need	Moderate level of need	High level of need
Teaching Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Language Use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In the past two years, which describes your participation in workshops or training sessions on writing?

- I did not attend any workshops about writing.
- I attended workshops that met for less than a day.
- I attended workshops that met for a full day.
- I attended workshops that met for more than one day.

How prepared do you think you are to teach writing properly?

- I am not prepared at all
- I am insufficiently prepared
- I am somewhat prepared
- I am well prepared

How often do you ask your students to do the following when you ask them to write about something? Mark only one answer in each case.

	Never or Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Very Often	Always or Almost Always
Use a computer for drafting and revising their writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a computer to complete writing that is started by hand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use word processing tools to check spelling or use a dictionary or thesaurus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use the internet to get information for their writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assess their own writing by using a specific rubric	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assess the writing of other students by using rubrics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent are you prepared to use each of the following technological resources for writing instruction? Mark only one answer in each case.

	Not at all	To a small extent	Moderate extent	Large Extent
Desktop computer laptop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tablet PC (notebook-like computer that allows users to write or draw through the use of a stylus or touchscreen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Digital projector (device that connects to a computer to display presentations or demonstrate lessons, such as an LCD)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CD-ROM, DVD-ROM (music player, or other portable media player)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cable/satellite/closed circuit TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online content (e.g., online software, podcasts, or streaming videos)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Digital media device (e.g., pocket sized music player, e-book reader, or other portable media player)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

How relevant do you consider the following goals for teaching writing?

	Irrelevant	Somewhat relevant	Totally relevant
Correct use of grammar/spelling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall structure/organization/ flow of written work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cohesion of thoughts and ideas in writing assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students' ability to support and argument with facts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students' ability to formulate their own opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Have you taken an international standard test that certifies your proficiency level of English?**

- Yes, I took it, but didn't pass.
- Yes, I took it, but don't have the results yet.
- No, I haven't taken it.

This is the end of the questionnaire.

**Thank you very much for your cooperation!**

*Adapted from: Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (2013)*

## Appendix B

### Student Survey

#### Students' reactions towards the writing tasks from their textbooks

Please read each statement and decide whether you agree or disagree by putting a check mark (✓) in the corresponding box according to the following five responses:

**SA** (Strongly Agree): 5

**A** (Agree): 4

**U** (Undecided): 3

**D** (Disagree): 2

**SD** (Strongly Disagree): 1

No.	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
<b>Practice during the writing activities</b>						
1	Most of the writing tasks in the textbook are familiar to me.					
2	The writing tasks help me use my background knowledge while I do them.					
3	The writing tasks guide me how to do my writing.					
4	The writing tasks in the textbook encourage me to work alone					
5	The writing tasks in the textbook make me to work in pair					
<b>Attitude towards the writing tasks</b>						
6	The writing tasks make me communicative with other students in writing classes.					
7	I like doing the writing tasks.					
8	The writing tasks in the textbook are difficult; therefore, the teacher should provide me other opportunities to improve my writing.					
9	Most of the writing tasks in the textbook are interesting to me; therefore, I pay attention on my writing.					
10	The writing tasks in the textbook help me think more about my writing because they are related to things I do outside the classroom.					

Source: (Mersiehazen Abebe, 2013)

# Appendix C

## Writing Tasks Observation Checklist

**WRITING TASKS OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**  
**WRITING ACTIVITIES FROM THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK IN USE AT COLEGIO DE BACHILLERATO "NUEVE DE OCTUBRE"**

Shift: Morning / Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: Second Baccalaureate " \_\_\_\_\_ "

Units	Book Section	Activities	Fulfilled task	Did not fulfill task	Observations
1	Student Book	Does the student read the article and complete the diagram on page 16?			
		Does the student write a short article about the most recent event at his/her school on page 15?			
	WB	Does the student read an article and complete the timeline on page 13? Does the student create the last paragraph of the article on page 13 by taking into account the content of the text on page 12?			
2	Student Book	Does the student identify the organization of an essay on page 27? ; Does the student identify sequence connectors used to maintain the connection between main ideas on page 27?			
		Does the learner choose one topic and write a short essay on page 27?			
	WB	Does the learner complete the text using the connectors in the Word Bank and identify the main idea and secondary ideas to complete the chart on page 20? Does the learner write logical thesis statements with the phrases given on page 22? Does the learner choose one of the thesis statements, brainstorm three arguments and use this structure to write the essay on page 22? ; Does the learner begin each paragraph with a sequence connector on page 22?			
3	Student Book	Does the student make a synopsis of a previous reading by identifying the key content on page 41? Does the student write a short biography about a famous person on page 41?			
	WB	Does the student put the following biography in order by writing a, b, or c in the correct place on page 28? ; Does the learner write the topic for each paragraph using the options given in the box on page 28? Does the student write a short biography of the person he/she has chosen on page 30? ; Does the student use information from the list (anecdotal information, factual information)? Does the student circle the words that show contrast among ideas on page 52?			
4	Student Book	Does the student write a comparison and contrast essay about the ways his/her family used to communicate in the past and nowadays on page 53?			

	WB	<p>Does the learner read the essay and mark the paraphrases below each paragraph as TS (topic sentence) or SS (supporting sentence) on pages 36 and 37?</p> <p>Does the pupil investigate some celebrations and traditions in the given countries and complete the descriptions comparing and contrasting such celebrations on page 38? ; Does the pupil choose one of the celebrations from the previous exercise and write the introductory paragraph of a comparison and contrast essay? ; Does the pupil develop two body paragraphs and the conclusion of the essay on page 38?</p> <p>Does the student read and choose a suitable subheading for each section on page 66? ; Does the student use the box with what to do, when to go, budget, what to eat, how to get there, reviews, location on page 66?</p> <p>Does the learner use guidelines to write a short holiday brochure that contains headlines, well known facts, attractions-benefits, experts' and tourists' reviews, key information on page 67?</p> <p>Does the learner choose the sentences (a-h) to complete the text on pages 44 and 45?</p> <p>Does the student identify the main features of the brochure on page 46? ; Does the student underline the content and match it with the corresponding feature?; Does the student write a short holiday brochure by using some of the features that he/she identified in the previous exercise on page 46?</p>				
5	Student Book					
	WB					
6	Student Book					
	WB	<p>Does the learner write an informative article about the problem he/she had been working on in project stages 1 and 2 on page 78? ; Does the student make use of arguments from authorities?</p> <p>Does the learner read the interview on page 52 and identify the introductory statement that refer to scientific information on page 53? Does the student read each idea and decide which one is stated explicitly (S) and which one is inferred on page 53?</p> <p>Does the learner carry out some research about the topic of learning languages with video games, and complete an outline on page 54? Does the learner use his/her ideas from the activity and write a short scientific article on page 54)</p>				

Adapted from *British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) (2010)* □

## Appendix D

### Authorization letter from the Principal of “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School

  
UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DE SANTIAGO DE GUAYAQUIL  
MAESTRÍA EN ENSEÑANZA EN IDIOMA INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

**SOLICITUD DE PERMISO PARA  
REALIZAR INVESTIGACIÓN**

Con motivo de nuestros estudios de titulación que seguimos en la Universidad Católica Santiago de Guayaquil, nos encontramos realizando la investigación titulada:

*“Potenciar el Desempeño Docente de Profesores de Inglés a través de la adaptación de tareas escritas en el Texto Oficial de Inglés para alumnos de Segundo Año del Colegio de Bachillerato “Nueve de Octubre”*

Para lo cual solicitamos de la manera más cordial su autorización para recabar información de los estudiantes de Segundo de Bachillerato y docentes de la asignatura de Inglés del plantel. Este proceso incluye entrevistas a los estudiantes, cuestionarios a los docentes y Fichas de Observación de los Textos de Inglés de los alumnos objeto de estudio.

Le agradecemos de antemano su tiempo y su amable atención a la presente, nos despedimos de usted

Atentamente,

 _____ Lic. Margarita González Sarmiento Egresada de Maestría en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés como Lengua Extranjera	 _____ Lic. Eduardo Luna Lara Egresado de Maestría en Enseñanza del del Idioma Inglés como Lengua Extranjera
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Machala, 08 de enero del 2018

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Autorizo a Lic. Margarita González Sarmiento y Lic. Eduardo Luna Lara la realización de la investigación antes descrita en el plantel educativo.

**Institución:** Colegio de Bachillerato “Nueve de Octubre”

**Autoridad:** Lic. Joffre Armijos, Mgs.

f.  \_\_\_\_\_





## DECLARACIÓN Y AUTORIZACIÓN

Nosotros, **González Sarmiento Margarita Mariuxi**, con C.C: # **(0703228916)** y **Luna Lara Eduardo Marcelo**, con C.C: # **(1709927022)** autores del trabajo de titulación: **Enhancing Teaching Performance through the adaptation of Writing Tasks in the Official Textbook for Second Baccalaureate learners at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School** previo a la obtención del título de **Magister en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés como Lengua Extranjera** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

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## **REPOSITORIO NACIONAL EN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA**

### **FICHA DE REGISTRO DE TESIS/TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN**

<b>TÍTULO Y SUBTÍTULO:</b>	Enhancing Teaching Performance through the adaptation of Writing Tasks in the Official Textbook for Second Baccalaureate learners at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School		
<b>AUTOR(ES)</b>	Margarita Mariuxi González Sarmiento, Eduardo Marcelo Luna Lara		
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<b>INSTITUCIÓN:</b>	Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil		
<b>FACULTAD:</b>	Sistema de Posgrado		
<b>CARRERA:</b>	Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés como Idioma Extranjero		
<b>TÍTULO OBTENIDO:</b>	Magister en Enseñanza de Inglés como Idioma Extranjero		
<b>FECHA DE PUBLICACIÓN:</b>	6 de Agosto de 2018	<b>No. DE PÁGINAS:</b>	125 páginas
<b>ÁREAS TEMÁTICAS:</b>	Metodología, escritura, innovación		
<b>PALABRAS CLAVES/ KEYWORDS:</b>	Teaching performance, writing, skills, textbook, enhancing, strategies		

#### **RESUMEN/ABSTRACT:**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the teaching performance of English educators at “Nueve de Octubre” Secondary School regarding the usage of the official textbook when teaching writing to Second Baccalaureate learners. Likewise, this study aimed to evaluate the content and textbook approach that guide the development of writing skills in order to adapt the EFL instruction effectively.

This study was conducted through action research. Thus, the first part starts with a literature revision providing findings about the Nature of Writing, Writing Approaches, and Principles for Teaching Writing. Furthermore, aspects such as Teacher Professional Development and Effective Strategies for Improving Writing Skills are mentioned. Moreover, it mentions how to create an environment conducive for EFL Writers, the role of the writing-teacher in the Ecuadorian curriculum, advantages and disadvantages of using textbooks, and writing tasks in the English textbook B1.1 Student’s Book are also mentioned. The data were collected through questionnaires, surveys, and observation checklists. The information was gathered from the textbook of Second Year of Baccalaureate, 250 students and 12 teachers of the above mentioned institution. Then, the data were analyzed both, quantitatively and qualitatively. After the analysis, it was concluded that the writing tasks developed in class needed improvement. Accordingly, the design of a proposal served to accomplish this goal. It consists on training sessions regarding writing instruction and how to adapt writing tasks with the use of an accompanying booklet, to inducing the reflection of educators and assisting them to visualize clear writing objectives.

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