

CHAPTER 4

Teacher Professional Development: Connecting the Past, Present, and Future

Verónica Chicaiza

Edgar Encalada

Sarah Iza

Cristina Jordan

Victor-Hugo Romero

Introduction

The teaching profession undergoes continual change to ensure that teachers remain current in new pedagogical thinking and practices. Teachers must not only acquire and apply new knowledge and skills but also reflect on what they are doing and discuss their teaching with peers. Such acquisition, reflection, and sharing means teachers should be flexible and responsive to change. While teachers are introduced to these professionalization activities during their university education degree programs, effective and engaged teachers will participate in this essential learning process throughout their careers. Perhaps the most effective, inclusive means of serving these needs is professional development for practicing teachers. Such supplemental training is particularly important for EFL teachers in Ecuador, where university education curricula are underdeveloped. As shown in Chapter 1, the majority of EFL teachers in Ecuador do not have field-specific training or adequate proficiency in English; these deficits lead to compromised hiring practices and poor student outcomes (Sevy-Biloon, Recino and Muñoz, 2020, p. 277). For this reason, relevant and effective EFL teacher professional development opportunities are essential in the Ecuadorian context.

Long aware of the situation, the MINEDUC has provided ample training and recruitment initiatives for new teachers, as well as professional development programs for practicing teachers, alongside the robust curricular reforms that were addressed in the previous chapter. The development of such programs came about following earlier data from 2009 suggesting the problem of low English proficiency of teachers. For example, in 2012, the “GO TEACHER” program provided scholarships to EFL teachers at the intermediate level to learn new teaching methodologies in the United States and then return to Ecuador and share their acquisitions with Ecuadorian EFL colleagues. After the MINEDUC instituted mandatory EFL learning in Ecuadorian public schools, the EDIFICAR Foundation¹ developed and implemented the “Tiempo de Enseñar/Time to Teach” program in 2016 to improve EFL learning through teacher support from outside of Ecuador. But the program experienced organizational problems, failed to achieve its goals, and was summarily canceled (Ortiz, Fabara, Villagómez,

1 The EDIFICAR Foundation is a nonprofit Private Foundation which runs the “TIME TO TEACH” program, an official program created by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador designed to improve English teaching in public schools. Specifically, the project’s goal is to strengthen the knowledge and methodologies of Ecuadorian public-school EFL teachers.

Hidalgo, and Lucía, 2017). Also, in 2016, with the support of the Undersecretariat of Professional Development, the MINEDUC promoted the professional development virtual platform MECAPACITO to teachers at no cost. In 2019, the United States Embassy and MINEDUC signed a 5-year agreement for the program “Ecuador Habla Inglés” to improve Ecuadorian English language proficiency. Through this program, 2423 teachers from public schools from all 26 provinces received training in language and teaching methodologies (Ortiz, Fabara, Villagómez, Hidalgo, and Lucia, 2017). Finally, the Peace Corps and MINEDUC signed a memorandum of understanding to support Ecuadorian EFL teaching by offering innovative methods that improve EFL teacher proficiency as well as increase general and English specific teaching skills (Peace Corps, 2022).

Other MINEDUC affiliated projects support EFL teachers by strengthening their networks throughout the country: the SIT TESOL Best Practices (English language teaching best practices course endorsed by SIT Graduate Institute, implemented by EFL Ecuador, Experimento de Convivencia Internacional del Ecuador); Education for Sustainability in the Galapagos Islands, carried out by the Galapagos Conservancy; and the Leaders Network for English Education offered by the Ecuadorian-North American Center (Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano) and the National Education University of Ecuador (UNAE), in which this project is a part of (Ortiz, et al. 2017).

Against this background, this chapter considers Ecuadorian EFL teachers’ attitudes toward their professional development opportunities and experiences, looking at teacher motivation, training content and effectiveness, and teacher preparation and background. Data analysis uncovers gaps between teachers’ perceptions of their individual abilities and needs and the external matters affecting the classroom experience such as the national curriculum and socioeconomic factors, echoing the disjunctures exposed in previous chapters. The devil, as it is said, is in the details; here apparent uniformity across results obscures significant gaps that our data elucidates in the following analysis. These problems are consistent with and inform those revealed from other perspectives in the book and support this chapter’s recommendations for designing and implementing future professional development to mend the gaps.

Assessing Professional Development Experience

Generally, as the research summarizes, professional training aims at improving individual teacher knowledge, classroom practices, English proficiency, and teachers' personal, intellectual, and social satisfaction (Creemers and Kyriakides, 2006; Nicolaidou and Petrido, 2011). Training, moreover, allows teachers to reflect on their practices, share ideas, and collaborate with peers. As part of these benefits, professional development should facilitate teacher participation within the curriculum development process that aligns curriculum with teacher classroom approaches and student needs (Alsubaie, 2016; Abudu and Mensah, 2016). In short, teacher training updates teachers on the substance of their professional efforts in ways that accountability and/or compliance alone cannot accomplish (Rodríguez, 2017). Teachers, for the most part, understand these purposes and support such opportunities.

Teacher motivation is critical to professional development and associated classwork efforts, planning, and implementation (Rodríguez, 2017). Undoubtedly, motivated teachers are much more likely to be efficacious, while unmotivated teachers may neither attend nor engage in training sessions nor be effective in their classes (Ringelhan, Wollersheim, Welp, Fiedler and Spörrle, 2013). Motivation, moreover, relies heavily on each teachers' estimation of their own professional knowledge and abilities, even if individuals think that their knowledge and abilities are better than any tangible evidence demonstrates (Rodríguez, 2017). It is difficult to determine, however, whether, or to what extent, this confidence affects professional development selection and effective teaching, but certainly the relationship is not causal.

Factors that motivate teachers to pursue training is another concern. By and large, teachers pick training opportunities based on their individual interests and needs such as learning about interactive teaching strategies, new technological resources, inclusive education, or international certifications (González Torres, 2003; Rodríguez, Núñez, Valle, Blas and Rosario, 2009). Teachers, moreover, choose professional development opportunities based on their students' needs (Nicolaidou and Petrido, 2011, p. 58), although, significantly, the latter is not the case in the following results.

Before the advent of communicative methodologies in EFL teaching, the literature treated professional development for EFL teachers, and language teaching more generally, in terms of two traditional pedagogical issues: content and

teacher methodology, in both general and practical terms. As recent EFL research has turned to communicative methodologies, it has integrated these discrete professional development issues with each other and associated factors in two complementary paths. First, various studies have considered the design and implementation of holistic professional development models, models for use with systematic curricular reform efforts. Other current undertakings consider specific, though systematic, methodologies and practices in content areas such as math, science (Supovitz, Meyer and Kahle, 2000), and EFL.

Taking a communicative perspective, current research on professional development for language teachers consistently demonstrates that large-scale, system inquiry-based models are effective in the short and long terms (Desimone, 2009; Orosz, Monzón and Velasco, 2021; Supovitz, Meyer and Kahle 2000). Moreover, the consensus is that effective professional development is characterized by several features, including adapting to the needs of participants and contexts, utilizing interactive and collaborative techniques, and allowing for networking. In addition, effective professional development allows enough time for teachers to become habituated to the content in practice, time provides the opportunity to assess teachers and students (Richards, 2017, p. 23). Finally, in developing systematic approaches to professional development, designers should use educational research, including educational effectiveness research (EER), to support their approaches.

In addition to and blended with holistic models for professional development, research is addressing context specific approaches. Each subject, of course, has its own best practices. Unlike math, science, or disciplines taught in the students' native language, teaching English or other foreign languages requires general knowledge of language methodologies as well as multiple and/or native language learning. Another context-related consideration, especially related to EFL teaching, is geographic, cultural context. Languages reflect and shape cultural values and practices, and cultural values and practices reflect and shape languages. Effective teachers must adapt their practices to local context. Holistic models aside, situations differ substantially (Richards, 2017, p. 23). Such adaptation is critical to professional development.²

2 Obviously, socioeconomic circumstances should not preclude teachers with less means from attending professional development opportunities. Similarly, learning English is too significant to deny any student access to opportunities based on socioeconomic issues (Richards, 2017). Adjusting teacher to context is particularly relevant to EFL.

Several factors influence how teachers acquire the expertise to adapt their teaching practices to context. As discussed in Chapter 1, high language proficiency is essential in EFL teaching. That significance aside, research shows that high proficiency is no guarantee of effective teaching. Effective EFL and language teaching are enhanced through teaching methodologies that are communicative, focused on student's proficiency and background, and create student-teacher relationships. Even teachers with high proficiency can benefit greatly through communicative teaching as it can do a great deal to make up for teacher proficiency problems (Richards, 2017, p. 125).

Two recent studies situated in Ecuador are relevant to EFL professional development; both address systematic educational reform along with Ecuador's specific national characteristics and educational needs. Daniel and Burgin (2017) consider Ecuadorian EFL students at the UNAE. The study focused on how students, who were finishing their education programs through teaching internships, responded to learning first-hand about students of local diverse ethnicities and languages whose native language was not Spanish. According to the data, the intern teachers learned substantively—especially about languages—responded positively to the new, cultural knowledge and changed their attitudes about indigenous students. Rather than perceiving them as a monolith, the student-teachers realized that each community has its own values, which shape the students and must be reflected in lesson plans and classroom practices. Unfortunately, no data is yet available on how these students fared in their subsequent teaching practices. Nonetheless, the study supports the premise that teaching methodologies should be built on socio-cultural framework, which facilitates student-teacher interaction and concern for the individual student in the local context.

Along these lines, Collado and Ruano (2019) developed an inclusive, holistic yet Ecuador-specific teaching framework to guide reform efforts, which would include professional development opportunities.³ The approach was based in local Ecuadorian cultural values and, thereby, challenged the Western politics and culture through education. The model depends on *Sumak Kawsay* (Good Living), a concept central to Andean, Kichwa communities.⁴ According to Sumak Kawsay, all elements of the land: flora, fauna, and land formations are equal and connected

3 The model was developed starting in 2015 at the UNAE in Ecuador.

4 Significantly, in 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to recognize the rights of nature in its Constitution, which is based on Sumak Kawsay.

with each other. The health of the community, therefore, requires maintaining balance between all its constituent parts. Balance is ensured by treating all elements with equity; and equity is mediated by embracing local Indigenous cultures and languages, which are oral, embodied, and performative. The educational model developed from this perspective is inherently communicative rather than traditional in context-specific ways. The model emerges from the oral, interactive, and participatory practices of *Sumak Kawsay* within a framework inclusive of local histories and geography, rather than the traditional top-down Western lecture format.

In sum, recent research on teacher professional development points toward the development of inclusive, systematic models and to culturally and linguistically specific applications of them. Still, teacher training research has not sufficiently addressed teachers' feelings about or input regarding such training content, external and administrative matters, or the impact of different approaches and programs on student learning outcomes and accountability (Antoniou, 2016). Given this background, this chapter looks at EFL teachers' attitudes toward development effectiveness, teachers' feelings about training content and engagement. Examining teachers' views of their professional development experiences, as well as their aspirations for further training, provides insight into the opportunities for future EFL teacher training programming with attention to the specific contexts in which they work.

Perceptions and Aspirations for Teacher Training

In this chapter, as with the rest of this volume, the quantitative analytic methodology aimed to capture how teachers perceived the professional development opportunities provided by the MINEDUC. The questions were framed to elicit teachers' perspectives on their reasons for picking training options, workshop quality/effectiveness, and teacher background and self-evaluations of key aspects of their teaching. The teachers' responses were measured on the following Likert scale: 1) Strongly disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Neither agree nor disagree, 4) Agree, and 5) Strongly agree. The responses were coded as ordinal variables.

The data was analyzed by means of frequency distribution of their Likert scale responses, which allowed the ranking and comparison of results. First, the frequencies

of responses to the individual questions were counted and ranked. Such an approach allowed us to organize data according to what teachers said they learned from the training with each of the other questions about professional development. These comparisons provided data about the degrees to which teachers agreed or not across critical issues. The results of the comparisons between the questions formed three groups of data: 1) motivational, why they chose training; 2) self-evaluative, how they estimated knowledge issues; and 3) predetermined matters of teacher background. Finally, correlations were conducted using cross-tabulations, testing for statistical significance and intensity, which exposed possible relationships between issues related to professional development as well as factors discussed in other chapters, such as their English language proficiency and views on the national curriculum.

Examining the mean average of responses on the Likert scale revealed important patterns in teachers' perceptions of training that suggest intrinsic values, such as opportunities for professional growth and reflection, are powerful motivating factors. Teachers expressed the strongest agreement with the statements that training provides new opportunities for professional growth ($\mu = 4.49$) and to reflect on their teaching practice ($\mu = 4.49$), while agreeing to a slightly lesser extent that high academic demands motivate them to pursue additional training ($\mu = 3.86$).

Figure 1. Ranking of Agreement on Statements Related to Teacher Training According to Mean

	N		Mean (μ)	Median	Mode
	Valid	Missing			
Training provides me with new opportunities for professional growth.	3177	636	4.49	5.00	5
I can reflect on my teaching practice through training.	3170	643	4.44	5.00	5
High academic expectations motivate me to continue to prepare myself.	3165	648	3.86	4.00	4
The training that I have received from the Ministry of Education or my institution has helped me improve my teaching practice.	3177	636	3.15	3.00	4
I have difficulties applying technological tools in my academic activities.	3178	635	2.65	2.00	2

	N		Mean (μ)	Median	Mode
	Valid	Missing			
The socioeconomic level of my students influences my decision to participate in training.	3187	626	2.65	2.00	2
My knowledge of teaching methods is sufficient for the level at which I permanently work.	3182	631	2.54	2.00	2
The training that I choose depends on my interests and not on the academic needs of my students.	3180	633	2.42	2.00	2
The training that I choose to improve my teaching practice depends on the level of English of my students.	3184	629	2.35	2.00	2
I have all the necessary knowledge to perform my job and do not need additional training.	3179	634	1.98	2.00	2

That is not to say, however, that teachers are seeking self-gratification through training opportunities. They express some disagreement, for example, with a statement privileging their own interests over the needs of their students ($\mu = 2.54$). Nonetheless, the data also suggests that teachers are not necessarily considering critical student-centered factors as part of their professional development needs. They express slight disagreement with the statement that their students' socioeconomic status influences their decision to participate in teacher training ($\mu = 2.54$) and with the role that their students' English proficiency influences their training decisions ($\mu = 2.42$). They also articulate slight disagreement with the statement about difficulties with technological resources ($\mu = 2.65$), indicating that training focusing on the use of ICTs and related technologies should not be priorities in future training initiatives.

The results also indicate that teachers recognize the need for continuous professional development, even while their needs are not being fully met by available training opportunities. Two metrics indicate that teachers believe in the value of additional training opportunities. In general, they strongly disagree with the statement that they do not need additional training ($\mu = 1.98$), and to a lesser extent that they have adequate knowledge for the level at which they work ($\mu = 2.54$). However, and perhaps most importantly, they are generally ambivalent about the value of training they have received from the MINEDUC and their institutions ($\mu = 3.15$). As

such, it can be surmised that such official training programs are not aligned with teacher perceived professional development needs.

Correlational analysis found no significant relationships between EFL teachers' views on professional development and their years of teaching experience. The same can be said for their educational attainment. However, teachers' self-reported English proficiency level shows some evidence that suggests potentially instructive tendencies. Teachers with a higher degree of English proficiency, for example, are somewhat more likely to agree that professional development promotes self-reflection (Somers' D .088) and is motivated by academic rigor (.053). Associations between English proficiency and a sense of the adequacy of their own training are also visible through correlations with two variables: a sense that their methodological knowledge is sufficient for the level at which they work (.051) and that they have the necessary knowledge to perform their job more generally (.041). Conversely, teachers with higher English proficiency overall are somewhat less likely to consider their students' socioeconomic needs ($-.050$) or their students' English abilities ($-.089$) when deciding on which professional development opportunities to pursue. Yet curiously the same teachers overall do not emphasize their own interests over their students'; the relationship is almost null (.01). They also report being less likely to consider technological difficulties ($-.097$) and are less likely to report the training received from MINEDUC as helpful ($-.074$). The fact that self-reported higher English proficiencies are negatively correlated with students' needs, socioeconomic background, and attitudes toward MINEDUC trainings is significant, as these also tend to be the strongest indicators that link professional training with the application of more diverse teaching methods and greater willingness to receive further training, as discussed later in this chapter.

A far better indicator is the certification of English proficiency. In contrast to self-reported English proficiency levels alone, which showed divergent relationships with views on professional development, a correlational analysis of teachers' English certification revealed more positive relationships with the professional development queries in most cases. That is to say, English certification is consistently associated with more favorable views of teacher professional development. As with most correlational analyses in this volume, the relationships are generally weak yet reveal instructive tendencies. Those who have an English certificate, for example, are also more likely to agree that professional development promotes self-reflection ($V = .090$) and academic rigor ($V = .057$) and provides opportunities for professional

growth ($V = .077$). However, English proficiency certification presents somewhat positive associations with teachers' consideration for their students' English level ($V = .077$). They also consider training more relevant for facing technological difficulties ($V = .072$), and when considering the socioeconomic status of their students ($V = .068$). These results present a contrast to the negative or void relationships uncovered when considered in relation to their English proficiency alone. Those with English certification also report somewhat more favorable impressions of the MINEDUC trainings overall ($V = .058$). Importantly, however, no relationship was found between English certification and teachers' sense that they have adequate methodological knowledge, either specific to their level or generally.

As Chapter 1 indicates, teachers most likely overestimate their English proficiency when they do not have a certificate to validate their abilities. It appears from these results, then, that these same teachers are somewhat overconfident in their teaching knowledge as well, showing less motivation toward pursuing professional development opportunities and experiences, and less favorable attitudes toward the trainings in which they do participate. The possible effects of these views on student learning outcomes are discussed in the following section. Although we cannot deduce for certain that English proficiency certification makes teachers more aware of any specific gaps in their knowledge, the results indicate that teachers with certified English levels are more inclined to view training opportunities through a variety of perspectives than their uncertified peers; more specifically, they not only consider their own interests but also technological knowledge, student's needs, and extracurricular factors that may affect student performance. In sum, English language certification may not be a strong indicator of greater motivation or favorability of any one aspect of professional development training, but when taken in the aggregate they show a more robust view of the benefits of teacher training overall.

Teaching Methods and Student Learning Outcomes as Factors of Professional Development

In addition to understanding the factors that affect teachers' views on professional development, the analysis must also consider how their attitudes toward professional development influence their classroom practice and perceptions of

student learning outcomes. Understanding both dimensions of the role of professional development opportunities, directly and indirectly, helps identify areas in which future teacher training initiatives can strategically intervene to generate the greatest impact.

For example, when teachers consider the socioeconomic status of students, they are somewhat more likely to agree that students achieve the required B1 proficiency level in the bachillerato programs by graduation (Somers' $D = .069$). In addition, teachers are slightly more likely to agree that they have the necessary resources to achieve curricular goals (.046) and that their students achieve these outcomes (.051). They are also slightly more likely to agree that curricular goals are reasonable (.058) and that the curriculum is culturally relevant (.043). Those who consider their students' English proficiency when choosing training present similar results: they are somewhat more likely to report better outcomes in their own classes (Somers' $D = .077$) and agree that they have the necessary resources to achieve curricular goals (Somers' $D = .098$). These teachers also report that their students are somewhat more likely to reach the required B1 proficiency of the bachillerato degree more generally (.099). Such results indicate that attention to both students' educational needs as well as extracurricular contexts generate more positive views of achieving curricular goals. However, no such relationships were found between considering students' socioeconomic background and their reported teaching practices. As such, it can be said that socioeconomic sensitivity can impact teachers' views on achieving curricular goals but not necessarily change the way they teach.

Such a disjuncture between professional development, teaching methods, and learning outcomes can also be seen among those who feel that they do not need further professional training. Teachers who report having adequate teaching knowledge are also somewhat more likely to agree that students achieve the B1 proficiency required in the bachillerato program (.107) and that their students meet curricular goals (.123). They are also more likely to concur that they have the resources necessary to achieve curricular goals (.136), that the curricular goals are reasonable (.075), and that the curriculum is culturally relevant (.061). Nonetheless, these teachers do not apply communicative methodologies to any greater or lesser degree than their peers. While teachers who feel they are adequately trained are somewhat more likely to implement group activities in their classes (.076), no other relationship was found to suggest that these teachers use more dynamic

and communicative methodologies, such as those discussed in Chapter 3. Similar results were found for those reporting greater concern for their students' socio-economic status when choosing training. They report a slightly increased focus on group projects and activities (.036) but, otherwise, no differences in their self-reported methodological approaches were noted. The results overall show that views on professional development that impact perceptions of learning outcomes do not necessarily indicate that students truly achieve those goals nor do they necessarily influence actual classroom practice.

The one professional development factor that appears to be associated both with changing views on student learning outcomes and on teaching methodologies are those teachers who reported more favorable views on the helpfulness of MINEDUC trainings. Teachers who hold these views are more likely to report a belief that their students meet curricular goals (.216), that they have the resources necessary to achieve those goals (.242), and that students overall achieve the B1 level required by the bachillerato program (.182). More importantly, however, they also indicate a positive relationship between favorable views on MINEDUC training and their own teaching practices, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 2. Use of Teaching Methodologies as a Factor of Perceived Usefulness of MINEDUC Trainings

Methodology	Somers' D
Cooperative reading and writing	0.137
Thematic exploration (for example, math, social studies, natural sciences) in the context of English teaching	0.123
Group research and/or projects	0.119
Working in pairs or groups	0.107
Narration and/or retelling experiences, stories, and events	0.107
Dialogues and exercised with controlled grammatical patterns	0.092
Dramatizations, interviews, roleplay, and simulations	0.091
Homework based on readings and audio	0.084
Memorization exercises: verses, riddles, dialogues	0.081
Interactive games and songs	0.077
Completion and ordering of phrases	0.077
Repetition and substitution exercises	0.041

This analysis shows that teachers who view their past training more favorably are also more inclined to use a greater variety of teaching methods, with the greatest gains in communicative practices. In Figure 2, methods that appear in bold are those identified as communicative. Further supporting this analysis, teachers who view MINEDUC trainings more favorably are somewhat more likely to describe their methodologies as varied and communicative overall (.094). They are also less likely to agree that class size affects the quality of English education (-.112), which may indicate that more varied approaches learned through the MINEDUC trainings can be deployed to help ameliorate some of the effects of class size on learning.

Cultivating Awareness through Professional Development

Overall, participant teachers are strongly motivated to pursue teacher training, the strongest motivating factors being to enhance their own professional growth and gain opportunities for reflection. The teachers feel, moreover, that the training sessions improved their teaching and have given them time to share and reflect on their pedagogy and own development; teachers who are most positive about training are also most likely to use communicative methods. The participants also believe that they have the knowledge and skills to teach their students at the latter's appropriate proficiency levels; in this case, those most confident are also more likely to think their students achieve the desired outcomes. However, the teachers are relatively uninterested in their students' proficiency level or background, although teachers who do consider socioeconomic matters seem somewhat more optimistic that their students' learning needs are being met. This analysis shows that teachers who view their past training more favorably are also more inclined to use a greater variety of teaching methods, with the greatest gains in communicative practices. Significantly, teachers also express a sense of self-awareness of gaps in their own knowledge but, as shown in Chapter 3, their descriptions of their teaching methodologies indicate they are not aware of specific ways in which their knowledge and practices diverge from their overly expressed ideals. By the large, the data reveals many inconsistencies between teacher knowledge, practice, and student outcomes.

More favorable responses aside, the participants express ambivalence about the usefulness of MINEDUC teacher training (mean = 3.15). Those who found the MINEDUC trainings less helpful are those who report higher levels of English proficiency ($-.074$); but no relationship exists between their views on the MINEDUC trainings and their educational attainment or years of experience. Another disjuncture appears between professional development, teaching methods, and learning outcomes among those who feel that they do not need further professional training. Teachers who report having adequate teaching knowledge are also somewhat more likely to agree that students achieve the expected learning outcomes. Thus, teachers' views on professional development and their perceived impact perceptions of learning outcomes do not necessarily indicate that students truly achieve those goals. Moreover, teachers' English certification and favorable attitudes toward MINEDUC training present the strongest evidence about how teachers link their teaching methods to achieving desired learning outcomes.

Ecuadorian EFL teachers are unaware of the bigger ESL pedagogical picture and are motivated by inaccurate thinking, perhaps false optimism, about what they know and do. While teachers claim they are aware of the mandated communicative practices, they do not seem to use them. Our data suggests that many teachers project an exaggerated view of their language proficiency and teaching knowledge that disincentivizes them from participating in teacher training and limits their ability to extract value from these experiences. Moreover, the respondents do not seem to know what professional development is and does. They appear to think of it as resumé improvement, whereas training involves multiple factors, among them, working with peers within a communicative methodology and continuous learning process. Presumably, teachers who are aware of and use communicative methodologies would be concerned with student proficiency and socioeconomic/geographic context. But the respondents are more concerned with personal motivations and matters. No wonder that the training courses do not meet teachers' needs and the teachers need them more than they indicated.

Taken together, teachers' perceptions and associated ambivalence about the training they received suggest that the sessions are not relevant to their needs or, at the very least, the majority of teachers are not seeing the relevance in them. But Ecuadorian EFL teachers must understand and use communicative methodologies in all its dimensions; teachers must be able to adapt to and reflect on their students' interests and needs and to elements of the local school context influencing

the daily realities of their classrooms. In turn, such knowledge would encourage participants to be truly self-reflective about the what, how, and why of their teaching practices (Carbonero et al., 2010).

At present, it would be difficult at best as well as irresponsible for Ecuador to respond to these problems by planning another systematic reform of professional development (let alone the entire educational system). Instead, the results and analysis in this chapter point to a ground-up approach, which is centered on the principles of communicative methodology and student-centered teaching practices. The research shows that the lack of resources, large class size, and low teacher proficiency, among other factors, can be compensated for and enhanced by teaching that is communicative, focused on student's proficiency and background, and by creating relationships.

As previous chapters demonstrated, the communicative approach supports teachers to link course content to the students' worlds and to develop close relationships with their students that are essential for effective teaching outcomes. Adapting their pedagogy to the geographic and socioeconomic characteristics that mark their students is especially necessary with foreign language teaching, since students' backgrounds vary. In Ecuador, many students speak Indigenous languages at home, and schools have students from different Indigenous communities. Such adaptation will motivate students, then teachers, to the benefit of all. It is precisely the teachers' motivation and good attitude in their teaching and learning processes that allows them to manage the extra work and working conditions.

This ground-up training must be planned with sufficient effort to ensure teacher participation. Clearly, efforts are wasted if teachers cannot attend. Training sessions should be organized and scheduled at convenient times and places, considering teachers' availability. Regional workshops should mitigate some of the attendance issues as well as help teachers adapt to the context in which they teach. Moreover, teachers should be involved in the curriculum development process both to acquire new knowledge and to contribute with their own input (Alsubaie, 2016; Abudu and Mensah, 2016; see chapter 2).

Ecuadorian EFL education has many challenges involving technology, infrastructure, and access; given that classes vary in size, duration, number of sessions, and

resources. In the meantime, and while working on these issues, local efforts can enhance current teaching outcomes. The teachers are motivated; situation-specific professional development will not only improve their motivation but the resulting positive changes in their teaching will lead to continuous learning.

This study was, as is often the case, limited by the questions included in the survey. With these limitations and gaps in mind, and the call to use EER research in future EFL work, the insights in this study should be used to conduct another round of surveys that would capture deeper insights into the problems identified here. To ground these surveys, as well as future research into ESL teaching in Ecuador, additional work must be conducted on the kinds of training that MINEDUC has provided to English teachers. These follow-up surveys should be designed to connect problems revealed by this study's survey with research on external factors that can facilitate/impede foreign language acquisition; this research could determine what teachers might be missing by overlooking these issues, study motivation among teachers, link intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and identify how appropriate teacher training improves educational outcomes, job satisfaction, and so forth.

Current training courses do not meet teachers' needs. Yet, this chapter makes it clear that Ecuadorian EFL teachers remain motivated and are committed to teaching and learning more and doing better. They want to be more self-reflecting and effective. They simply must learn what communicative practices are and link them with student needs and interests. This ground-up approach will help and lead to better outcomes.

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