

## Contextualization of Training Input in Multi-Level Replication and Scaling-up Approach in EFL Teacher-Training

Contextualización de módulos de capacitación como estrategia para la repetición multinivel y el escalamiento en la formación de docentes de inglés

**Hazel Acosta**

**Diego Cajas**

Universidad Nacional de Educación, Azogues, Ecuador

**Elizabeth Minchala**

Kansas State University, Manhattan, USA


This study deviates from the standard view of template-based training courses that have dominated the experience of in-service English teachers in Ecuador. Its purpose is to underscore the contextualization of training modules as a strategic method for duplicating and scaling up multi-level teacher training to sustain their knowledge and skills. The impact is assessed through a three-level survey administered to 394 teachers from three provinces. The results suggest that the influence of class size and the adaptability and replicability of training are factors that influence the effectiveness and sustainability of an English as a foreign language program. The study highlights the crucial role of collaboration that facilitates collective efforts to contextualize training to achieve profound insight related to classroom practices.


*Keywords:* contextualization, in-service, replication, scaling-up, sustainability, teacher-training


Este estudio se desvía de la postura tradicional de las capacitaciones que han dominado la experiencia de los profesores de inglés en Ecuador. Se buscó realzar la contextualización de los módulos de capacitación como un método estratégico de reiteración y ampliación para consolidar el conocimiento y habilidades de los docentes. Para evaluar el impacto del método, se realizó una encuesta a 394 profesores de tres provincias. Los resultados sugieren que el tamaño de la clase y la adaptabilidad y reiteración de las capacitaciones son factores que influyen la efectividad y sostenibilidad de un programa de inglés. Este estudio reafirma la importancia de la colaboración a fin de aunar los esfuerzos colectivos para lograr reflexiones profundas relacionadas con la práctica docente.

*Palabras clave:* ampliación, capacitación docente, contextualización, docentes en ejercicio, sostenibilidad, reiteración

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Hazel Acosta  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0281-2681> · Email: [hazel.acosta@unae.edu.ec](mailto:hazel.acosta@unae.edu.ec)

Diego Cajas  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6792-1443> · Email: [diego.cajas@unae.edu.ec](mailto:diego.cajas@unae.edu.ec)

Elizabeth Minchala  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5112-3797> · Email: [oeminchalab@ksu.edu](mailto:oeminchalab@ksu.edu)

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## Introduction

The release of the 2016 *Basic Education Curriculum* in Ecuador mandates that English be offered as a mandatory subject in primary education (Year 2–Year 10) and in secondary school. The mandate has resulted in a shortage of approximately 2,800 English language teachers (Constante, 2016), and this has compelled some school administrators to ask non-English teachers to teach English. Besides human capital, familiarity with the new set of teaching materials, knowledge of the pedagogical models, and better proficiency skills are pressing challenges that have confronted English and non-English language teachers alike. The apparent lack of continued professional development in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) inadvertently rendered these teachers helpless while they were struggling to achieve teaching competence, access work mobility, and take spaces for promotion.

To mitigate the shortage of teachers and respond to their concerns over content and strategies in English teaching, we submitted the project “Building Inclusive EFL Teacher Training Networks” to the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) in 2017. The AEIF is a global project competition in which alumni of various United States Department of State-sponsored programs participate. Our project was one of the two submissions from Ecuador, which was selected for funding out of 1,014 proposals from 125 countries (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Our team is composed of three alumni: project leader, management point person, and the logistics head.

The goal of the project was to provide EFL teachers in Ecuador with professional development training that would serve as a mechanism to mitigate the shortage of human capital. It also aimed to offer training that responds to the pedagogical challenges of the 2016 English curriculum (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador [MinEduc], n.d.), as most teachers are unfamiliar with the teaching approaches and methods that the curriculum promotes.

Our project followed a three-phased approach that facilitates the replication of training content and capability-building of in-service teachers. Its fundamental strategy was to construct 12 modules grouped into three sets of skills—productive, receptive, and pedagogical skills. Each module has three general teaching strategies that are conceptualized based on the threads and themes of the MinEduc’s (n.d.) English component of the curriculum. Furthermore, each module has three features: differentiation of instruction, accommodation of learners’ different needs, and integration of information and communications technology (ICT) to respond to learners’ academic needs from Year 2 in primary school to Year 3 in secondary school.

The trained teachers modified the 12 modules in the replication phase, and they assumed the trainer’s role to ensure that the training responded to their needs and was appropriate to their classroom situation. When the trained teachers modified the modules (training input), and led the replication training, they contextualized their strategies.

Finding out how the contextualization of modules as training input influenced participating teachers’ experience and practices during the implementation of the AEIF project constitutes the rationale of this study. The survey helped us generate data to establish the impact and influence of the project.

Specifically, this paper aims to highlight the importance of contextualizing input, such as modules, as an effective strategy in a multi-level replication and scaling-up approach in teacher training. The paper also intends to produce sets of concrete features and characteristics of training modules that can serve as essential tools for in-service teachers in transforming the pedagogical approaches espoused in the curriculum into effective techniques and practices in their EFL classrooms.

## Literature Review

### Status of Professional Development in EFL in Ecuador

For the last three decades, the Ministry of Education of the Ecuadorian government has promoted national strategies, created programs, and made significant investments to expand opportunities to learn English from Year 2 until Year 3 of senior high school. These initiatives aim to improve English language learning (ELL). This has been reflected in the enactment of educational policies and the creation of English programs that have resulted in more people around the country having chances to learn English. However, despite the enhancements in ELL policy and curricular reforms, studies indicate that English proficiency remains low. The educational system does not seem to produce satisfactory proficiency levels among students (Ortega-Auquilla & Aucchahuallpa-Fernández, 2017). Based on the 2019 English Proficiency Index of Education First (2019), Ecuador ranks 81 out of 100 countries that took part in the study and occupies the lowest in South America. Its proficiency is considered very low against the index used to measure the different areas of the test.

In recent years, the MinEduc (n.d.) has made significant changes within its educational policies. The release of the *National Curriculum Guidelines for English as a Foreign Language* (NCGEFL) finalized the formulated policies. The guidelines introduced a series of educational innovations, and one of them is focused on implementing professional development programs for in-service English teachers.

To develop teacher competence, the MinEduc and the National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation launched the *Go Teacher Program* as a professional development program that benefited approximately 3,000 teachers. The *Go Teacher Program* aimed to enrich the competencies and skills of teachers after an academic immersion from three

to nine months in some selected universities in the United States. It provided opportunities for recipients to interact with the language in an English-speaking country and gain the knowledge and skills needed to be highly effective teachers. Despite the forceful enactment of the *Go Teacher Program*, the impact was not widespread due to a lack of cascading mechanisms where knowledge acquired by those who went abroad was not shared with and used by the larger population of teachers who remained in schools.

Through the project “Strengthening the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language,” the MinEduc (n.d.) has been on the frontline of recruiting qualified English teachers. The Ministry has acknowledged the crucial role of constant professional training of EFL teachers in the in-service (MinEduc, n.d.) sector to help teachers cope with the pedagogical and content challenges in implementing the curriculum in their classrooms. Several studies have revealed the lack of professional development programs for EFL in-service teachers in Ecuador (Burgin & Daniel, 2017; Villafuerte-Holguin & Macías-Mosquera, 2020); however, the few training programs implemented lack research to determine their effectiveness. According to Calle et al. (2012, 2015), it is necessary to expand research studies on the impact of professional development and teacher training while taking diverse educational contexts in Ecuadorian classrooms into account.

Some studies have reported the need for professional development courses to be embedded in policies that recognize the importance of teachers’ work and consider the educational realities they have to face daily in their contexts (Calle et al., 2012, 2015). These studies affirm that training programs must effectively carry out the pedagogical approaches spelled out in the curriculum. When teachers have insufficient knowledge about pedagogical approaches that are privileged in curricula, like the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach (Al Asmari, 2015), the teaching-learning process does not seem effective.

The mandatory offering of English to all public schools in Ecuador, which espouses pedagogical approaches in implementing it, entails professional development courses that prepare teachers for the job. Enriching professional training entails contextualizing resources such as modules or books that adjust teaching to the reality of the teachers and the nature of the learners.

### Contextualization of Training Input

Teachers' professional development has become tightly connected to school improvement efforts in many different ways worldwide. The main purpose of professional development efforts is to help teachers recognize the need to reflect on their learning, and use their insight to improve practices (Avalos, 2011). English teachers need to update their teaching competence through professional training to boost students' academic performance in learning English.

Professional development training is an integral component of in-service training. Teachers are provided with activities and instruction in the field to update their pedagogical skills and enable them to respond to challenges in education such as curriculum change and the adoption of different teaching approaches. To ensure that in-service training responds to the needs of teachers, Al-Wreikat et al. (2010) underscore that "teachers who attended or are currently attending in-service training courses must be given some role in determining the training topics and activities that they actually need" (p. 24). Topics must be relevant, timely, and responsive to their needs.

In Ecuador, language institutes, publishing houses, and teacher education institutions (TEIs) provide teacher training on EFL. For instance, publishing houses have in-house trainers who offer training when sets of books they produce are selected as the main student textbook in a school. The drawback of this type of training is its lack of responsiveness to the context of teachers and students.

Schools and government institutions that request professional development courses must ensure that

training considers the situation of the institution—teachers' needs, the learning environment, and the students' characteristics (Brauckmann et al., 2020, p. 2). Administrators who are sensitive to varying school contexts would most likely plan comprehensive training programs for teachers that promote collaboration and facilitate the sustainability of knowledge and skills learned from any training.

Pre-packaged training or "ready-made" courses generally provide professional updating to in-service teachers; however, not everything they have received from this type of input is translated into effective practices in EFL classrooms. Teachers may find trainers and their training exemplary and innovative; however, they do not always use what is learned when returning to their classrooms. The non-implementation of the classroom strategies can be attributed to many factors, such as teachers' perceived inability to repeat the technique as trainers demonstrated it and their inability to implement their training in the classroom. Due to their lack of understanding, their input from the training is not feasible for implementation in their school's context. Vold (2017) affirmed this when he examined teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching a subject based on curricular intentions and demands. He found out that effective teacher education programs must consider the school's context and meet the needs of students, schools, and society. This justifies the contextualization of the training input through the resources, activities, and materials shared with teachers or participants.

The limited pedagogical knowledge of the curriculum's prioritized teaching approaches impedes the successful implementation of curricular demands in EFL classes. In most of his works, Vold (2017) draws attention to the mismatch between teachers' pedagogical content knowledge or what they are expected to know (Richards, 2010) and the curricular demands may hamper the implementation of the curriculum. Bunch (2013) suggests that the concept of pedagogical content knowledge is needed to develop English purposefully. However,

this type of teaching is not widely practiced in schools. This is where the contextualization of training input in professional development programs addresses the gap between what teachers know and are prepared to teach and what the curriculum expects them to implement in their classes.

Vold (2017) emphasizes that most EFL teachers suffer from linguistic insecurity, thus making them feel less confident. Less confidence in their linguistic performance leads to textbook dependence and propensity to use traditional methods of instruction (Richards, 2010) in their teaching. Further, this lack of confidence in proficiency skills is more pronounced among novice teachers (Fraga-Cañadas, 2010) and with those who do not have a bachelor's degree in English teaching but are teaching English due to a shortage of teachers in schools.

Despite exposure to professional development programs such as teacher training, some in-service teachers have not transferred what they have learned into effective teaching practices in their EFL classes. The problems related to the transfer of knowledge can be attributed to several factors. Among these factors is the ineffectiveness of teaching techniques shared (Al-Wreikat et al., 2010, p. 18); insufficient room for collaboration in methodology; and lack of relevant approaches that sustain practices. It is essential to create effective strategies in developing in-service training programs to ensure that insight into pedagogy, content, and techniques is gained. Teachers who gain such understanding can transfer their knowledge to their colleagues and ultimately to their students. In creating the training input, the modules developed for the AEIF project factored in the pedagogical approaches espoused in the Ministry of Education curriculum.

The process of contextualizing training input in the AEIF project capitalized on collaboration as the crucial element in knowledge transfer and promoted a scaling-up approach in teacher training. Nguyen and Ng (2020) point to teacher collaboration as key in introducing change in practices characterized by having shared

goals, the interdependence of key actors, willingness to participate in the process, and sustained interactions in activities. In the AIEF project, the collaboration of in-service teachers in the three phases is viewed as one of the strategic approaches that promote teacher's ownership of their training and ensures the sustainability of teaching strategies and methods at the classroom level.

Due to challenges related to pedagogy, content, and strategies, a contextualized teacher training is needed to respond to in-service teachers' varying needs; not the standard, recipe-style, and template approach in content delivery. The gap in the in-service training courses highlights the importance of contextualized and relevant training in improving EFL teachers' performance by selecting successfully implemented strategies. In this context, the previous studies indicate the importance of evaluating EFL teachers' in-service training courses through teachers' perceptions and their performance in EFL classrooms.

The incorporation of feedback of the trained participants ensures that relevant and appropriate strategies and resources are modified and adjusted to suit the context, and that the learning environment, students' baseline knowledge, and participants' profile are covered. Incorporating feedback, likewise, facilitates replication and scaling-up of the training. Context is an influential element that either facilitates or impedes the replication of training and the implementation of strategies in classrooms. Gebre and Polman (2020) view context as an attribute defined by different stakeholders such as teachers and curriculum developers. Its nature as a defined element does not render it flexible; thus, it cannot be simply changed to fit professional development programs' strategies.

A sociocultural perspective is used to overcome the limitations posed by context. It underscores the importance of incorporating trainees' experiences to modify and adjust the context that defines what can and cannot be done. Some researchers such as Gebre and Polman (2020) and Silseth and Erstad (2018) have

adopted the sociocultural perspective. This perspective entails the contextualization of teaching to incorporate authentic practices and learning into instruction. Significant input and contributions from learners and teachers are included when contextualizing teaching, and this transforms the context without deliberately changing the core elements that define it. Instead, contextualization efforts enrich the training and implementation activities in classrooms.

In a similar vein, contextualizing training entails the adjustment, modification, and adaptation of strategies and resources based on the feedback and comments of participants. When training is replicated in a multi-level approach for scaling up purposes, trained participants can adjust the sequence, modify the steps of a strategy, and adapt teaching resources to fit the school context. When strategies are implemented at the classroom level, classroom teachers may also contextualize the strategy to address the students' needs and overcome limitations concerning aspects of the learning context. The survey helped us verify the effectiveness and extent of influence of the training's contextualization, which constitutes the justification of this study.

## Method

Before writing the modules, our team conducted a needs assessment. This type of assessment was carried out through document analysis, informal conversations with teachers, and classroom observations during teaching practice in selected schools. In-service teachers at cooperating schools helped determine the teaching areas they find difficult or challenging in implementing the curriculum's pedagogical approaches: content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and CLT. The needs assessment done in preparation for the training input factored in these two approaches to determine whether or not in-service teachers are adept at or familiar with them.

Based on the needs assessment results, we prepared 12 modules that served as the main strategy and content of the professional development training. To ensure that the

modules respond to the needs of the in-service teachers, our project had three phases: in-house training (Phase 1), replication of training in schools (Phase 2), and the classroom implementation of the modules (Phase 3) in the in-service teachers' schools. The in-service teachers served two roles during the project implementation: as training participants and as lead trainers to their colleagues.

During Phase 1, the project team selected 52 out of 918 English teachers from 17 districts in three provinces of Zone 6 in Ecuador through a qualifications-based process. Through a scale-up capability-building approach in Phase 2, the 52 teachers returned to their districts and formed a training team of three teachers. All training teams from different districts gave 20 more teachers in their province the same training. One team alone trained 22 participants. In Phase 2, two types of teachers received the training: English language teachers and non-English teachers. Non-English language teachers are those whose specialization is not English, but who are tasked to teach English due to a shortage of teachers, especially in rural schools.

In-service teachers became lead teachers or teachers who spearheaded the replication training in their districts in Phase 2. They adapted and adjusted the training modules to their context. They used alternative resources if they did not have the materials used during the training as long as the strategy's essence remained. The training in districts lasted between one week and one month. After that, 342 in-service teachers were trained in the three provinces of Azuay, Cañar, and Morona Santiago.

The 342 trained teachers tried the strategies they learned from the lead teachers, and out of 342, 305 teachers (89%) implemented the 12 modules in their classrooms (Phase 3). At the classroom level, the trained teachers further adjusted and adapted the strategies to their context.

In the first and second phases, the trained teacher modified the 12 modules to respond to their situation and context. This modification served as the indicator of whether the training project impacted the teachers' professional development or not. Our team administered

a survey questionnaire to determine the impact of the modules after the completion of the two phases. The modules were evaluated against 10 indicators that served as the basis for their conceptualization and construction.

Upon completing the training project, another survey was administered that evaluated the combined overall impact of the training modules in Phases 1 and 2. It measured the effectiveness of the features and characteristics of the modules.

The study employed a quantitative approach using a survey as a data collection method to determine the modules' impact after in-house training (Phase 1), the training replication (Phase 2) in districts, and its implementation at the classroom level (Phase 3). Twelve trainers developed the 12 modules that were grouped into three skills: productive, receptive, and pedagogical.

There were 202 applications for the in-house training in Phase 1, and 52 lead trainers were selected based on three requirements: B2 proficiency level, tenured teacher of the Ministry of Education, and willingness to replicate the training in their districts. The 52 teachers answered the survey twice—after Phases 1 and 3—and 342 teachers answered the second survey after Phase 2.

Each module consists of three formulated strategies based on two principal approaches: CLT and CLIL.

The MinEduc mandates the use of these approaches. The structure consists of the curricular thread, the description of the strategy, step-by-step implementation in the classroom, and the differentiation techniques in each module. Table 1 shows the 10 parameters that were used to evaluate the modules in all phases.

The 10 parameters served as the basis for developing the 12 modules, and they were the same parameters used to evaluate the impact of the module in the three phases. The modules on productive skills focus on writing and speaking skills. Speaking skills focus on building teachers' ability to facilitate student's oral production interactively and communicatively. Writing skills develop teachers' ability to provide constructive feedback on students' sentence construction and literacy development. The modules on receptive skills highlight the development of listening and reading. Strategies for listening promote active techniques that develop teachers' capacity to understand conversations in different situations. Reading strategies help teachers follow specific techniques and use resources that facilitate students' understanding of texts and meaning. Pedagogical skills improve teachers' manner and mode of teaching in assessment, classroom management, and cooperative learning strategies that facilitate students' interaction in an EFL classroom.

**Table 1.** The 10 Parameters Used in Evaluating the Modules

Parameters	Descriptions
Practicability	The techniques and steps are workable.
Ease of steps	Each step leads to another in an organized way.
Skills-based	Strategies develop the specific skills (productive, receptive, and pedagogical) targeted in each module.
Flexibility	The strategy is applicable in different learning situations.
Adaptability	The resources needed to carry out the strategies are easy to make in the classroom.
Creativity	The strategies develop teacher's creativity.
Engaging	The strategies are attractive to and motivating to students.
Replicability	The strategies can easily be repeated using the resources available in schools.
Curriculum-oriented	The strategies can be adapted to the Ministry of Education English curriculum
Suitability to class size	The strategies can work well with big class sizes.

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the features and characteristics of the modules that teachers find effective when they replicated the training they received and when they tried the modules in EFL classrooms.

A scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*to a great extent*) was constructed to establish how the modules' features and characteristics had an impact on the in-house training, replication, and classroom implementation. The scale is also used to determine the extent of the overall impact of the modules on the two phases.

A three-level survey was administered after every phase of the project was finished. The 52 participants (Phase 1) and the 343 participants (Phase 2) answered the survey. In the overall impact survey, only 52 teachers answered the survey due to their involvement in all project implementation phases. There were two types of participants: the lead trainers (52 participants) and teachers (343 participants) trained by the lead trainers in Phase 2. Both types are in-service teachers from the 17 districts of the three provinces of Zone 6 of Ecuador.

## Results and Discussion

After Phase 1, the 52 lead trainers evaluated the modules used in the weeklong training against the 10 parameters. Participants evaluated the modules against each parameter on a scale of 1 to 5, with five as the maximum value (see Table 2).

In general, the participants rated the modules at 4 to 4.6, which means that the modules are effective to a certain extent. Among the 10 parameters, the suitability of the techniques to the class size in public schools was rated the lowest. This can be attributed to the participants' perception that although the modules are effective, it may be challenging to implement them in big classes. Class size in most Ecuadorian classrooms typically ranges from 35 to 40.

Teachers may find training effective and relevant, but this does not automatically translate into changed classroom practices due to the perceived notion

that the techniques learned are not suitable to the class sizes they deal with within their schools. The challenge that class size poses to the effectiveness of professional training is affirmed in the results of two more parameters: replicability in classrooms and whether teaching resources are curriculum-oriented or not. The potential of the modules to be replicated and applied in EFL classrooms is viewed as only useful to a certain extent since teachers who receive training would always adapt the input they receive the way it is demonstrated during training. Teachers often see training input as effective to a great extent when applied to their classroom context. They have a tendency to not modify or revise the information or input to suit their needs and class. This implies that administrators must ensure that the institution's situation (Brauckmann et al., 2020) is considered when providing training.

**Table 2.** Evaluation of Modules in Phase 1

Parameters	<i>M</i>
Practicability	4.6
Ease of steps	4.5
Skills-based	4.5
Flexibility	4.5
Adaptability	4.4
Creativity	4.5
Engaging	4.5
Replicability	4.1
Curriculum-oriented	4.1
Suitability to class size	4.0

*Note.* The survey was administered to 52 lead trainers using a Likert scale with values of (5) *to a great extent*, (4) *to a certain extent*, (3) *to a minimal extent*, (2) *to a low extent*, and (1) *not at all*. *M* denotes the mean of the computed values.



In-service teachers rated other parameters—ease of steps and flexibility of the topics to learners—higher. These features are often viewed as not necessarily tied to the implemented curriculum, or features not influenced by class size. Similarly, skills-based activities, creative strategies, and engaging features of the modules are rated with a mean of 4.5. These features are regarded as effective in module conceptualization for teachers’ professional training, and this emphasizes the importance of student-driven and universal elements in activities where class size and the curriculum do not impede implementation and replication of the modules in EFL classrooms.

The practicability of the modules is a characteristic that teachers consider easy to replicate and implement in classes. Teachers view technique-oriented teacher training programs or courses as doable in their classrooms as long as these techniques are appropriate to their context, including the class size, availability of teaching resources, and practical exercises. Factoring in teachers’ ideas promotes the collaboration of stakeholders like teachers (Gebre & Polman, 2020) and enables a socio-cultural perspective (Silseth & Erstad, 2018) in contextualization efforts.

The practicability (4.6) of the techniques in the training modules enriched the participants’ knowledge and skills in teaching English; however, some of these techniques do not inherently render them capable of contextualizing the training resources when confronted with class size issues and curriculum-related concerns. When teachers witness excellent professional training, they have undoubtedly

learned from the demonstration. However, when they are asked to replicate with their colleagues and their students the training received, they find it difficult to tailor-make the training strategy and input to their contexts.

When results from the survey are compared with the types of skills taught in the modules, the results show that productive skills are more challenging to replicate and implement in the classroom. Table 3 shows the comparative results in the three skills that categorize the three sets of the 12 modules, where each set of four modules are focused on each of the three skills: receptive, productive, and pedagogical skills.

In developing productive skills, the lead trainers rated the modules as “effective to some extent” (3.8) with respect to class size in schools. Similarly, receptive skills modules were rated almost the same (4.0)—just slightly higher under the same parameter. Both values imply that actual school class sizes should be factored in when designing and conceptualizing training modules.

The values are almost the same as the replicability and applicability parameters that developed teachers’ productive and receptive skills. Among the three skills, however, the lead trainers evaluated pedagogical skills higher than the other two in all three parameters. Pedagogical modules are general strategies that develop teachers’ assessment, classroom management, and collaborative techniques. Often, teachers view these strategies as embedded in teaching; thus, they are easier to adapt and adjust to their class size and classroom context.

**Table 3.** Evaluation of the Modules by Skills

Type of Skills	Suitability to class size	Replicability	Applicability to curriculum
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
Productive skills	3.8	4.1	4.1
Receptive skills	4.0	4.1	4.2
Pedagogical skills	4.2	4.3	4.3

*Note.* The survey is administered to 52 lead trainers using a Likert scale with values of (5) *to a great extent*, (4) *to a certain extent*, (3) *to a minimal extent*, (2) *to a low extent*, and (1) *not at all*. *M* denotes the mean of the computed values.

In Phase 2, the contextualization strategy included adjustment that considered the nature of the learning environment, class size, availability of instructional materials, and the teacher's knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement the modules and their strategies.

After the month-long training in Phase 2, the 342 teachers evaluated the modules under the same parameters as in Phase 1. Table 4 shows the comparative results of the participants' evaluations of the two modules in the two phases.

After the revisions made in Phase 1, the 342 participants who received the lead teachers' training rated the modules higher than the values obtained in Phase 1. The difference ranges from 0.1 to 0.7 except in "practicability," where the value remains the same. The significant jump in the value is evident in the parameters "engaging" (0.3) and "curriculum-oriented" (0.7).

**Table 4.** Comparison of Evaluation Results in Two Phases

Parameters	Phase 1 (lead trainers)	Phase 2 (public school teachers)
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
Practicability	4.6	4.6
Ease of steps	4.5	4.6
Skills-based	4.5	4.6
Flexibility	4.5	4.6
Adaptability	4.4	4.5
Creativity	4.5	4.7
Engaging	4.5	4.7
Replicability	4.1	4.3
Curriculum-oriented	4.1	4.8
Suitability to class size	4.0	4.3

*Note.* The survey is administered to 342 public school teachers using a Likert scale with values of (5) to a great extent, (4) to a certain extent, (3) to a minimal extent, (2) to a low extent, and (1) not at all. *M* denotes the mean of the computed values.

The improvement in the mean values in Phase 2 can be attributed to the contextualization of the modules during post-training time. In Phase 2, the lead trainers adapted the strategies and used their techniques to teach and make the training input operational without changing the nature and essence behind the creation of the modules. The contextualization of the modules refers to the adaptation in three aspects: sequence of activities, instructional materials, and teachers' techniques to adapt to the classroom context where the teachers teach. Teachers adapted the modules based on what they considered and viewed as relevant and appropriate for their classes. They changed some sequences of some strategies due to their students' age and proficiency level; they used other teaching resources based on cost and availability of resources in their schools. They changed some techniques in some strategies due to class size. The increase in the mean value from Phase 1 to Phase 2 in all parameters supports Al-Wreikat et al.'s (2010) idea that teachers must be given roles in leading replication training in their schools to facilitate the adaptation of training input.

For example, during the in-house training, one of the modules promotes role-play using total physical response (TPR). The university trainer changed the classroom into a restaurant ambiance, where participants participated in the different activities that characterized a typical restaurant. The participants were provided with all the materials and real-life tools to practice authentic conversations using TPR. When it was the replication time in districts, teachers did not create the restaurant scenario; instead, they came up with a different set-up using recycled materials and cheaper resources. They combined some of the steps to adjust to the learners' linguistic competence.

In Phases 2 and 3, the trained teachers had the "freedom" to adapt the modules based on their context as long as the crux of the strategies in the modules are not changed to a different one. This contextualization strategy was key in adapting the training modules to the curriculum's context and classroom teachers' resources.

In most EFL teacher training programs in Ecuador, the modules used and techniques demonstrated are replicated in classrooms without modification to preserve the “standard template,” which is considered the factor that assures effectiveness in teacher training. However, teachers do not usually try or use strategies and activities they view as difficult and challenging to implement in their classrooms.

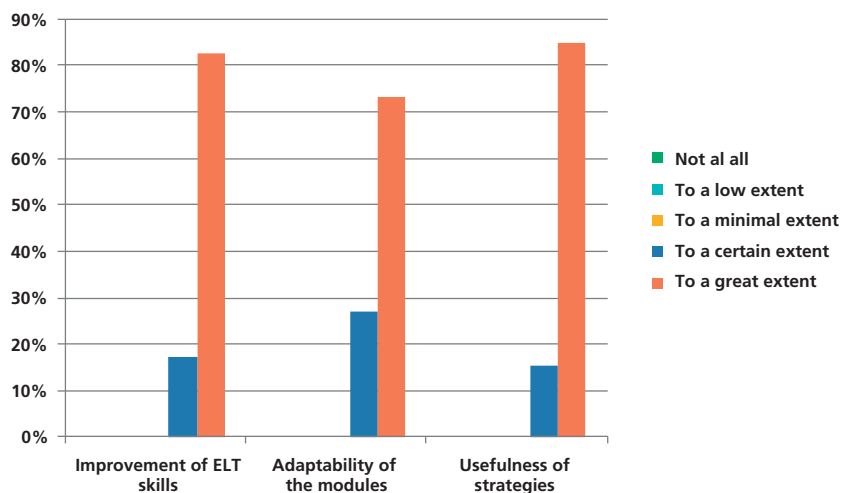
An institution or organization can provide exemplar and excellent teacher training. Its participants may view the input and experience provided as commendable; but there is no guarantee that what is learned is translated into practices that would significantly impact the learners as end-users. It is more challenging in the EFL area due to chronic problems related to teachers’ proficiency in the English language and limitations to understanding pedagogical approaches espoused in the national curriculum. Any excellent training proves to be ineffective when teachers or participants do not develop a profound understanding of rationale and logic behind the strategies. Contextualization of the training is needed when participants are asked to repeat what they have learned to their colleagues and carry out a classroom implementation of the modules to ensure the sustainability of practices.

In the last phase or Phase 3, the replication of the modules’ strategies was implemented at the classroom level. The 52 lead trainers and the 305 (89%) of the 342 public school teachers trained in Phase 2 applied the modules’ strategies to their classes. The contextualization of the classroom modules was generally the same in Phase 2; however, the emphasis was on teachers’ techniques and the way they implemented the strategies they deemed effective and appropriate to their classroom and their students.

After a month, the 52 lead trainers were asked to evaluate the overall impact of the modules. They were selected in the final impact evaluation due to their involvement in the year-long professional training program. Moreover, they assumed two roles: participant and lead trainer, which allowed them to gain a more profound insight into how contextualized training input can benefit teachers in their practices and ensure that the knowledge, skills, and abilities are sustained at the classroom level.

In evaluating the modules’ overall impact in all phases, three aspects were used as parameters: improvement of teacher’s English language teaching (ELT) skills, adaptability of the modules to the curriculum of the MinEduc, and usefulness of EFL strategies (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Overall Impact Evaluation of the Modules in the Three Phases



Based on Figure 1, 84% of the teachers find the usefulness of the strategies in the modules as effective to a great extent, and only 15% view the strategies as effective to a certain extent. Improvement of ELT skills is another aspect that teachers consider effective (83%) to a great extent. The improvement can be attributed to the modules constructed and prepared to help teachers improve their pedagogical knowledge and abilities to develop students' receptive and productive skills in learning EFL.

Further, most teachers find the adaptability of the modules to the context as effective to a great extent (73%). Adapting modules to teachers' context and understanding how input from professional training should be carried out in classrooms is challenging. In Phases 1 and 2, lead trainers were allowed to tweak and adjust the strategies to ensure that they were appropriate and relevant to the teaching-learning process. By contextualizing the training modules, the content is adapted to the curriculum, which results in a learning environment where the activities become more relevant, appropriate, and doable. This reinforces the importance of contextualizing training input and professional development programs by providing opportunities for teachers to "transform their knowledge into practice" (Avalos, 2011, p. 10) to maximize students' potential to learn a foreign language. Despite the scale-up approach in the AEIF project, where the quantity of teachers trained is important, the usefulness and purpose for which the modules were created did not get lost in the replication process. This is due to the contextualization of training input as a strategy in professional development training.

## Conclusions

The impact of professional development projects such as teacher training rests primarily on their effectiveness in classroom instruction that benefits students as end-users. Furthermore, the sustained character of professional development projects is transferred not

just to those who were trained but also to others who need it the most. Teachers who need it the most are those who feel and are conscious that their pedagogical knowledge is insufficient. They are the ones who think they do not have a firm grasp or profound understanding of the strategies needed to bring the curriculum demands to fruition.

Our project implemented a three-phased replication strategy anchored on capability building and a scale-up approach in training. The 12 modules, which are the primary strategy and input of the training, facilitated teachers' knowledge, skills, and abilities to teach EFL in three key language teaching skills: productive, receptive, and pedagogical skills. The replication strategy was a mechanism for determining the value of the modules used by the lead teachers in their training. Furthermore, its effectiveness was also measured when implemented at the classroom level by those who were trained during the replication phase. This strategy emphasizes the crucial place of collaboration among teachers to assume roles as trainers for their colleagues. When teachers assume the lead trainer's role, they use their lens in adapting the modules. Changes in roles pave the way for teachers to gradually become independent implementers of the strategies with less reliance on outside experts. Assuming different roles in any teacher-training program encourages teachers' mobility, as they do not remain participants but can become trainers as well.

The scaling-up approach in professional training does not always refer to an increase in the number of beneficiaries. In this study, the approach considers the sustainability of innovative practice through collaboration among teachers as pivotal. Contextualization of the training modules was the strategic approach to ensure what Coburn (2003, p. 3) refers to as the scale of training which includes "depth, spread, shift and sustain, and sustainability" of projects.

In Phase 1 of the project, three features of the 12 modules were evaluated comparatively lower than the

others, namely, replicability of the strategies, orientation to the Ministry of Education curriculum, and suitability to class size. While teachers generally recognize the quality of the content and the usefulness of the strategies of training modules, the factors that influence their decision to help their colleagues use the strategy is the extent of replicability, suitability, and affinity to the curriculum they are mandated to use. Teachers have the penchant to copy what was demonstrated to them during training, and if they feel that such a strategy poses challenges when tried in real classrooms, they would most likely not use it.

When the evaluation results from Phase 1 are compared with the results in Phase 2, the evaluation of the modules increases in all 10 parameters. The increase can be attributed to the contextualization of the modules where lead teachers modified and adjusted the modules to suit their training needs and their colleagues' professional needs. The results show that when professional development projects such as teacher training incorporate the participants and empower them to own the training as their mandate, the impact is more relevant and knowledge transfer is more sustained.

As part of professional development, teacher training is always conceived of as a place for teachers to update and improve their baseline knowledge, skills, and abilities; however, in most cases, what teachers often get from this training is a "template" of what and how to do the strategy or technique. They tend to view training input as a set of strategies and activities that have to be followed without considering the context that influences the effectiveness and impact of training when it lacks the adjustment, modification, or revision that the classroom teacher needs to do.

Another aspect reaffirmed through the AEIF project and evaluated through the survey is that productive skills are generally more challenging to develop in EFL teacher training than receptive and pedagogical skills. The challenge in providing training input that helps teachers build students' productive skills in learning English is usually influenced by class size. Teachers find it difficult

to imagine using the strategies they have learned from the training to develop students' writing and speaking skills when the number of students is overwhelming. When teachers view class size as a hindering factor, the replicability of the input, such as strategies learned from the training, is considered difficult to implement at the classroom level. Teachers' views about the implementation potential of strategies learned from professional development projects are always associated with the teachers' opinion of their capability to do it in the context that inadvertently influences their teaching. There seems to be a lack of understanding of the basic tenets and the logic behind strategies learned during professional development training. It is not the repetition of the strategy that poses a problem. It is how teachers understand the logic and the essence of the strategy and apply what they have learned in their classes.

The usefulness and the improvement of the ELT skills are two important features of the module strategies (Figure 1) responsible for the success of the training contextualization process. After introducing contextualization strategies in two phases, the lead teachers witnessed the improvement in their teaching practices in the classroom through the modules they revised, adjusted, and modified to suit students' needs and to respond to the challenges of EFL teaching.

The contextualization of teaching practices and input is notably done in administration-related courses (Brauckmann et al., 2020), science topics integration in schools (Gebre & Polman, 2020), and incorporation of cultural resources (Silseth & Erstad, 2018) in instruction, all aimed at providing appropriate resources and activities. In this study, the contextualization shifts to training input to help English teachers appreciate the influence of context in replicating professional development courses.

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### **About the Authors**

**Hazel Acosta** holds a PhD in development studies with a specialization in educational research and development. As an educator, she is a US Department of State SUSI Fellow, an EARMUS visiting academic, and a national trainer in the Philippines. Currently, she heads research and teacher training in Ecuador.

**Diego Cajas** has a doctorate in applied linguistics from the University of Warwick, UK. He is a fellow of the US SUSI program and a KOICA grantee. In the last decade, he has been working in preservice and graduate English teaching and research programs.

**Elizabeth Minchala** is a doctorate candidate in curriculum and instruction at Kansas State University, USA. She is professor of English as a second language, curriculum and instruction, and learning theories at the college level. She is currently serving as a graduate teaching assistant in the College of Education at Kansas State University.