

Exploring English Teachers' Perceived Preparedness for Pedagogical and Institutional Demands Upon Entry to Public Schools

Explorando la percepción que tienen los profesores de inglés sobre su preparación para las exigencias pedagógicas e institucionales al incorporarse a las escuelas públicas.

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Abstract

This study examines English teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to address pedagogical and institutional demands upon entering the public education system in Ecuador. The study focuses on the discrepancy between initial teacher training and the demands of public-school contexts. It explores teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical and institutional preparedness and identifies the challenges and gaps experienced during their professional insertion. A qualitative approach was employed within an interpretative paradigm, using semi-structured interviews with three teachers with up to three years of experience in public institutions. Data were analyzed through discourse analysis supported by thematic categorization. Findings indicate that teachers recognize their theoretical training as a foundation; however, they report difficulties in applying this knowledge to real classroom situations, particularly in classroom management, attention to diversity, and contextual adaptation. Additionally, participants report a high administrative workload and challenges related to institutional regulations. The study identifies a gap between teacher education and the demands of public educational contexts, highlighting the need to strengthen practical training, preparation for inclusive education, and teacher induction support.

Keywords: teacher education, educational administration, teacher preparedness, pedagogical demands, public schools.

Resumen

Este estudio examina las percepciones de los docentes de inglés sobre su preparación para afrontar las demandas pedagógicas e institucionales al ingresar al sistema de educación pública en Ecuador. El estudio se centra en la discrepancia entre la formación docente inicial y las demandas de los contextos de escuelas públicas. Explora las percepciones de los docentes sobre su preparación pedagógica e institucional e identifica los desafíos y vacíos experimentados durante su inserción profesional. Se empleó un enfoque cualitativo dentro de un paradigma interpretativo, utilizando entrevistas semiestructuradas con tres docentes con hasta tres años de experiencia en instituciones públicas. Los datos fueron analizados mediante análisis del discurso apoyado en categorización temática. Los hallazgos indican que los docentes reconocen su formación teórica como una base; sin embargo, reportan dificultades para aplicar este conocimiento en situaciones reales de aula, particularmente en el manejo de clase, la atención a la diversidad y la adaptación contextual. Además, los participantes reportan una alta carga administrativa y desafíos relacionados con las regulaciones institucionales. El estudio identifica una brecha entre la formación docente y las demandas de los contextos educativos públicos, destacando la necesidad de fortalecer la formación práctica, la preparación para la educación inclusiva y el acompañamiento en la inducción docente.

Palabras clave: formación docente, administración educativa, preparación docente, demandas pedagógicas, escuelas públicas

Introduction

Transitioning into the professional teaching environment is generally recognized as one of the most critical and challenging stages in a teacher's career. Regardless of prior training or experience, teachers entering a new institutional context must adapt their pedagogical practices to the realities of schools, which often involve not only instructional responsibilities but also administrative and organizational demands.

In Ecuador, the transition into public schools can be challenging for English teachers. Although teacher education programs focus on language teaching methods, they may not fully prepare

teachers for the institutional and pedagogical demands of fiscal schools. New teachers often face difficulties related to curriculum alignment, lesson planning, administrative tasks, and Ministry of Education regulations. Despite these challenges, there is limited research on how teachers perceive their level of preparedness. This lack of evidence makes it difficult to understand their experiences and to evaluate whether teacher training programs effectively address the realities of the public education system.

Teacher induction, understood as the process of supporting educators during periods of professional adjustment, has been identified as a key factor influencing teacher adaptation, confidence, and effectiveness. Research suggests that well-structured induction processes that combine pedagogical and institutional support can significantly enhance teachers' professional experiences and instructional practices (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Previous research in English Language Teaching (ELT) has predominantly focused on linguistic competence and methodological preparation, while comparatively less attention has been given to teachers' readiness to navigate institutional and administrative expectations. Studies conducted in various educational contexts indicate that teachers frequently report feeling underprepared to manage bureaucratic procedures, policy requirements, and workload management associated with school systems. Despite increasing attention to teacher education and professional development, there remains a scarcity of research examining how English teachers in Ecuador perceive their preparedness when entering the public education sector.

Most ELT studies in Ecuador have centered on student outcomes, language proficiency levels, and teaching methodologies. In contrast, the perspectives and experiences of teachers during their transition into public institutions remain underexplored. This gap limits the ability of universities and policymakers to evaluate whether existing teacher preparation programs adequately address the pedagogical and institutional realities of public schools. From both an educational and policy perspective, understanding teachers' perceived preparedness is essential for informing improvements in teacher education, induction processes, and institutional support systems.

Addressing this gap is essential for informing improvements in teacher education, induction practices, and institutional support systems. Understanding teachers' perceived preparedness upon entry into public schools may contribute to the development of more context-responsive

training and support mechanisms that facilitate professional adjustment and enhance teaching quality.

In this context, the present study aims to explore English teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for the pedagogical and institutional demands encountered upon entry into Ecuadorian public schools. Specifically, this study seeks to identify teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical preparedness, examine their preparedness for institutional demands, analyze the challenges experienced during this transition, and determine which aspects of preparation teachers perceive as insufficient. To guide this investigation, the study addresses the following research question: How do English teachers perceive their preparedness for the pedagogical and institutional demands encountered upon entry into Ecuadorian public schools?

Theoretical framework

Teacher preparedness is widely recognized as a central factor influencing teaching effectiveness and learners' outcomes. In English Language Teaching (ELT), preparedness is typically associated with teachers' ability to integrate linguistic competence, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and assessment practices that together foster meaningful and sustained learning (Richards, 2017). Preparedness is also understood as a multidimensional construct that becomes particularly relevant during professional transition. When teachers enter new institutional contexts, their sense of readiness is often tested against the practical, organizational, and relational demands of real educational environments.

Research across educational contexts indicates that teachers frequently experience discrepancies between the preparation received during university training and the realities encountered in schools. Beginning and transitioning teachers may feel insufficiently prepared to address the complexity of classroom dynamics, institutional expectations, and administrative responsibilities, despite having completed extensive theoretical coursework (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These challenges are especially pronounced in public education systems, where regulatory frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and organizational structures shape teachers' daily professional practice.

Within the Ecuadorian context, teacher preparedness has emerged as a persistent concern in relation to English language education. Empirical studies reveal that although teachers often value communicative and CLIL-oriented curricular principles, the enactment of these pedagogical approaches is constrained by contextual factors such as administrative overload,

limited resources, large class sizes, and infrastructural deficiencies (Alvarez Llerena et al., 2022; Orosz et al., 2021). This indicates that preparedness cannot be understood solely in terms of pedagogical competence but must also incorporate teachers' capacity to adapt to institutional realities.

Teachers' professional practice is shaped not only by pedagogical knowledge and classroom competence but also by the regulatory and institutional frameworks governing educational systems. From this perspective, teacher preparedness must be conceptualized as a construct influenced by both international professional standards and national legal mandates.

At the international level, the Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards (UNESCO & Education International, 2019) conceptualizes teaching as a profession organized around three interrelated domains: Teaching Knowledge and Understanding, Teaching Practice, and Teaching Relations. This framework establishes that effective teaching requires mastery of subject content, understanding of how students learn, planning and preparation, classroom organization, classroom management, and assessment literacy. Additionally, it highlights teachers' responsibilities in collaborative professional engagement, communication with families, and continuous professional development.

The UNESCO framework positions teaching as an ethically grounded and socially embedded profession. Teaching is understood as a practice oriented toward maximizing student learning, wellbeing, and future opportunities. Within this view, teacher competence extends beyond technical instructional skills to include ethical responsibility, professional judgement, and relational engagement. The framework also assigns responsibility to governments and educational authorities to ensure that teachers are provided with appropriate professional support, development opportunities, and working conditions conducive to quality teaching (UNESCO & Education International, 2019).

Within Ecuador, teachers' roles and professional obligations are formally regulated by the Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural (LOEI). The LOEI codifies teachers' pedagogical and institutional duties, transforming professional expectations into legally binding responsibilities. Teachers are required to elaborate and present academic planning in a timely manner, reinforcing planning as a mandated dimension of professional practice (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2011).

Similarly, the LOEI establishes that teachers must evaluate students in accordance with pedagogical principles, communicate assessment outcomes appropriately, and provide pedagogical support and follow-up to address learning difficulties. These provisions position assessment, feedback, and instructional support not as optional practices but as core professional obligations (Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador, 2011).

Beyond classroom-level functions, the LOEI introduces explicit institutional demands. Teachers must comply with constitutional provisions, legal regulations, and institutional norms. They are required to fulfil the legally established working schedule and remain subject to integral and permanent evaluation processes. The law further regulates workload through a forty-hour weekly schedule that encompasses teaching, planning, coordination, professional updating, and additional institutional responsibilities. This regulatory structure reflects the multifaceted nature of teachers' professional roles within public education systems.

Within the Ecuadorian educational system, teachers' professional responsibilities are also shaped by ministerial regulations governing evaluation and institutional processes. For instance, the Ministry of Education establishes that educational institutions must implement structured evaluation processes, including diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment, as well as institutional evaluation models designed to monitor student learning and academic progress (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2024). These regulatory frameworks contribute to the administrative and institutional demands that teachers must navigate in their daily professional practice.

When examined together, the UNESCO professional standards and the LOEI legal framework reveal a strong convergence. Both frameworks emphasize planning, assessment literacy, professional responsibility, collaboration, and continuous development. However, the LOEI introduces a regulatory dimension that directly shapes teachers' daily institutional experiences, particularly within the public sector. Compliance, evaluation, administrative duties, and workload distribution become structural components of teachers' professional reality.

For teachers transitioning into Ecuadorian public schools, preparedness therefore extends beyond pedagogical competence. It involves adapting to regulatory compliance, understanding bureaucratic processes, navigating evaluation systems, and adjusting to institutional cultures. Preparedness becomes an evolving construct negotiated within specific organizational contexts rather than a fixed outcome of pre-service education.

Pedagogical preparedness refers to teachers' perceived readiness to design, implement, and evaluate effective teaching and learning processes. Studies conducted in Ecuador reveal that although teachers and pre-service teachers often demonstrate methodological knowledge, they may experience difficulties translating theoretical preparation into classroom practice (Burgin & Daniel, 2023; Quintana-Guamushig et al., 2023). Reported challenges include classroom management, differentiation, formative assessment, and adaptation to diverse student needs.

Institutional preparedness involves teachers' perceived capacity to navigate organizational and administrative dimensions of schooling. Research highlights that teachers in Ecuadorian public schools encounter challenges such as administrative workload, infrastructural limitations, and insufficient institutional support (Orosz et al., 2021). These constraints influence not only instructional quality but also teachers' professional motivation and sense of efficacy.

Teacher induction literature provides a relevant framework for understanding early professional adjustment. Induction programs incorporating mentoring, structured support, and institutional guidance have been associated with reduced stress, improved adaptation, and increased teacher retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Rodas, 2019). In Latin America, however, induction systems remain unevenly implemented, leaving many teachers without systematic early-career support (Marcelo & Vaillant, 2017).

Transition challenges frequently emerge due to discrepancies between training and institutional realities. Teachers may experience uncertainty when adjusting to curriculum regulations, administrative processes, accountability mechanisms, and institutional cultures distinct from prior professional contexts (Alvarez Llerena et al., 2022). These experiences reinforce the need to examine preparedness as a situated and interpretative construct.

Despite the growing body of research on ELT, teacher education, and professional development in Ecuador, limited attention has been given to how English teachers perceive their preparedness when entering public schools. Existing studies primarily address instructional methodologies, curriculum implementation, or generalized professional challenges, while fewer investigations centre explicitly on teachers' perceived readiness to navigate both pedagogical and institutional demands at the point of institutional entry.

Therefore, a gap remains in understanding how English teachers interpret their preparedness for the pedagogical and institutional realities encountered upon entry into Ecuadorian public schools. Addressing this gap contributes to informing teacher education practices, institutional

support mechanisms, and policy decisions aimed at facilitating professional adjustment and enhancing teaching quality.

Analytical Categories Derived from Literature

The reviewed literature suggests that teachers' preparedness for entering public schools can be analyzed through four main dimensions. These include pedagogical preparedness, focused on lesson planning, classroom management, assessment, and teaching methods; institutional preparedness, related to curriculum policies and administrative requirements; the challenges experienced during teachers' initial integration into public schools; and the perceived gaps between university preparation and the actual demands of school contexts. These dimensions informed the design of the interviews and guided the analysis of the collected data.

Table 1. Analytical Categories and Indicators

Analytical Category	Indicators
Pedagogical Preparedness	Lesson planning, teaching strategies, classroom management, assessment practices
Institutional Preparedness	Regulations / normative frameworks, curriculum knowledge, administrative curricular tasks, institutional adaptation
Demands Encountered Upon Entry	Administrative challenges, workload demands, pedagogical challenges, adaptation processes
Perceived Gaps	Areas of insufficient preparation, perceived deficiencies, unmet training needs

The indicators within each analytical category are organised following a logical sequence reflecting the pedagogical process and the hierarchical structure of the educational system. Pedagogical indicators follow the instructional cycle of planning, implementation, classroom management, and assessment, while institutional indicators reflect the progression from regulatory frameworks to institutional adaptation.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study is framed within the interpretative-hermeneutic paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and best understood through participants' meanings and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This paradigm is appropriate given the study's focus on English teachers' perceived preparedness and their interpretations of the pedagogical and institutional demands encountered upon entry into public schools.

The study is further informed by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), which emphasizes how individuals construct meanings through social interaction. From this perspective, teachers' perceptions of preparedness are understood as interpretations shaped by their professional experiences within institutional contexts.

This view is also supported by Goffman (1959), who highlights how individuals interpret and perform their roles within social settings, adjusting their behavior according to contextual expectations. In this sense, teachers' perceptions of preparedness are constructed through their interaction with institutional norms, roles, and demands.

This study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretative approach to explore teachers' perceptions through an in-depth analysis of their lived experiences. The study focused on understanding how English teachers interpret their preparedness when entering the Ecuadorian public education system and how they experience the transition into fiscal schools.

Participants were English teachers who had recently joined public educational institutions in Ecuador and had direct experience with the pedagogical and institutional demands of their initial professional integration. To ensure relevance to the research objectives, only teachers with a maximum of three years of experience in the public-school system were included. This criterion allowed the study to capture perceptions associated with early professional adaptation and entry into public-school contexts.

In line with qualitative research principles, participants were considered key informants rather than a representative population. Their narratives provided rich and meaningful insights into how teachers construct and interpret their sense of preparedness. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants who could contribute information-rich accounts related to the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria included being graduates of an

English Language Teaching (ELT) program, having recently entered the Ecuadorian public-school system, and possessing up to three years of professional experience in public institutions.

The study involved three key informants, as this number was considered appropriate for achieving depth of analysis and detailed exploration of lived experiences. Rather than aiming for statistical representativeness, the research prioritized interpretative depth, narrative richness, and conceptual understanding, which are central characteristics of qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Instruments

Data were collected through a semi-structured interview protocol designed to explore teachers' perceived preparedness for pedagogical and institutional demands upon entry into public schools.

The interview protocol was grounded in analytical categories derived from the literature:

- Pedagogical preparedness
- Institutional preparedness
- Demands encountered upon entry
- Perceived gaps

The semi-structured format ensured consistency across interviews while preserving flexibility to explore emergent themes and participant-driven narratives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The interview questions were developed based on the analytical categories derived from the literature. The alignment between analytical categories, indicators, and interview questions is presented below.

Table 2. Alignment Between Analytical Categories, Indicators, and Interview Questions

Analytical Category	Indicators	Interview Questions
Entry into Public School System	Institutional regulations; curriculum requirements; administrative curricular tasks	Q1, Q2

Pedagogical Preparedness	Lesson planning; teaching strategies; assessment practices; classroom management	Q3, Q4, Q5
Pedagogical Demands	Pedagogical challenges; classroom implementation of teaching strategies; classroom management difficulties	Q6, Q7
Institutional Preparedness	Curriculum knowledge; administrative procedures related to curriculum implementation; institutional responsibilities	Q8, Q9
Institutional Demands	Administrative curricular tasks; documentation requirements; institutional regulations	Q10
Perceived Gaps	Areas of insufficient preparation; perceived deficiencies; unmet training needs	Q11, Q12
Reflection	Recommendations for teacher education programs	Q13

Instrument Validation

Prior to data collection, the interview protocol was submitted for expert review in order to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives and analytical categories. The expert evaluated the instrument using a validation format that assessed question relevance, linguistic adequacy, and conceptual consistency. Feedback from the expert review was incorporated to refine the wording and structure of the interview questions before conducting the interviews.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through purposive outreach strategies. Invitations were distributed via professional networks and direct contact with English teachers working in Ecuadorian public schools in the province of Manabí. Teachers who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate voluntarily. The invitation included information about the study's purpose, participation requirements, and ethical considerations.

Prior to data collection, participants received an informed consent form detailing the objectives of the study, confidentiality measures, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Consent was obtained electronically before conducting the interviews. Participants were also asked for permission to audio-record the sessions for research purposes.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted virtually via Zoom or Meet. The interviews explored teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for pedagogical and institutional demands upon entry into public schools. Each interview followed the semi-structured protocol while allowing flexibility for elaboration and emergent themes. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using discourse analysis, supported by thematic content analysis techniques. This combined approach enabled examination of how participants construct meanings regarding preparedness, while also identifying recurrent themes, patterns, and interpretative categories emerging from the narratives.

The analysis was guided by the predefined analytical categories while remaining open to emergent categories arising from the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were carefully considered throughout the study to ensure participants' rights, privacy, and well-being. Before participating, each teacher received an information sheet explaining the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and the estimated time commitment. The document specified that participation consisted of a virtual semi-structured interview. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that interviews would be audio-recorded only with permission, that responses would be used exclusively for research purposes, and that confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed. Only teachers who provided explicit informed consent were included in the study, and consent was obtained prior to scheduling and conducting the interviews.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and teachers were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence. This condition was clearly stated in the consent form and verbally reiterated at the beginning of each interview. To protect participants'

identities, pseudonyms were assigned to all informants, and no identifying information related to individuals, schools, or institutions appeared in the final report.

All collected data, including interview recordings and transcripts, were securely stored on password-protected devices and backed up in encrypted digital folders accessible only to the principal researcher. The study involved minimal risk; however, some participants may have experienced slight discomfort when reflecting on personal professional experiences related to preparedness and entry into the public-school system. Participation required approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

The potential benefits of the study included contributing to a deeper understanding of English teachers' experiences during their integration into Ecuadorian public schools. The findings may support improvements in teacher education programs, induction processes, and institutional support mechanisms, benefiting universities, policymakers, and future educators.

Results

The analysis of the interview data revealed a set of interrelated themes that reflect teachers' perceived preparedness for pedagogical and institutional demands upon entry into public schools. The findings are organized according to the main analytical categories guiding the study.

Institutional Demands

Participants reported a significant administrative load upon entering the public education system, primarily associated with paperwork, reporting requirements, and planning responsibilities. Tasks such as managing student data and complying with institutional procedures were described as time-consuming. As one participant noted, "all of that is more administrative paperwork and it is required" (P1).

These demands were perceived by participants to exceed those found in the private sector. Additionally, participants indicated that frequent changes in policies and protocols contribute to a sense of instability. One participant noted that "routes and protocols change constantly" (P1), while another stated that "there is more administrative workload than in the private sector" (P2). Some participants also mentioned potential legal implications, stating that "it even involves legal processes that can be dangerous" (P1). According to the participants, these demands often limit the time available for instructional practices.

Pedagogical Preparedness

Participants generally perceived their initial teacher education as providing a theoretical foundation in methodologies and language knowledge. The practicum was identified as a valuable component for initial exposure to classroom contexts; as one participant stated, “the practicum helped a lot to understand the context” (P1).

However, participants described their preparedness as partial when facing real teaching environments. Despite reporting confidence in theoretical strategies, they encountered difficulties when applying them in complex settings. This is reflected in statements such as “the training was good, but it does not reflect the reality of the classroom” (P2) and “the preparation was adequate, but it does not teach real situations” (P3).

Perceived Gaps

Participants reported a gap between theory and practice, stating that they felt unprepared for real classroom situations: “practice is different from theory” (P2). A specific gap identified by participants was the lack of training regarding Special Educational Needs (SEN). They noted that their education did not provide sufficient guidance for diverse learning needs, with one participant stating, “they do not teach how to work with students with SEN” (P2).

Additionally, participants indicated a lack of practical training in areas such as lesson planning, classroom management, and the application of methodologies. For example, one participant noted that “methodologies are not explained in practice” (P3). Contextual factors, including students' social realities and motivational issues, were also cited by participants as areas where their preparation was insufficient: “they do not prepare you for real classroom situations” (P2).

Classroom Challenges

Participants identified several challenges related to classroom conditions in public schools, notably class sizes exceeding 40 students. As one participant explained, “working with more than 40 students makes it difficult to apply strategies” (P3).

Participants also reported low student proficiency levels, noting that many students begin with minimal prior knowledge of English: “students start from zero” (P2). This was described as being compounded by limited instructional time, with one participant noting there are “only 3 hours per week” (P1). Finally, participants identified behavioral issues and low student engagement as obstacles, citing “problems of discipline” (P3) and a “lack of motivation” (P3).

Curriculum Issues

Participants reported a mismatch between the national curriculum and classroom realities, noting that curricular expectations do not always align with students' proficiency levels. One participant stated, "there is a disconnect between the curriculum and classroom reality" (P3). The reported absence of standardized planning guidelines for English requires teachers to design materials independently: "there is no standard planning for English" (P2). Furthermore, participants noted that the implementation of frameworks such as ERCA and UDL increases planning complexity: "ERCA, UDL, and insertions make planning more complex" (P2).

Professional Development and Adaptation

Participants emphasized the importance of continuous training and self-directed learning. Many reported seeking additional courses and resources, stating that "continuous training is key" (P2).

In their accounts, adaptation involved modifying methodologies and instructional approaches to meet student needs. The integration of technology and innovative methodologies was also identified by participants as a strategy to address student engagement: "more focus on technology and innovative methodologies is needed" (P3).

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal important gaps between teacher education and the actual demands faced by English teachers in Ecuadorian public schools. Participants consistently reported that their university preparation was mainly theoretical and did not sufficiently prepare them for the realities of classroom practice. These results support previous research suggesting that teacher education programs frequently prioritize pedagogical theory over practical classroom experience. Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that many teacher education programs focus excessively on abstract knowledge without providing enough opportunities for authentic practice-based learning. Similarly, Freeman (2002) highlights that language teacher education often lacks a strong connection between theoretical instruction and real teaching contexts.

In this study, teachers explained that methodologies were learned conceptually but were not effectively applied in realistic classroom situations, reinforcing the need for more practice-oriented training models.

A relevant finding of this study was the limited preparation teachers received for working with students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Participants reported not feeling adequately trained to manage learner diversity or inclusive classrooms effectively. Florian (2012) explains that inclusive education requires teachers to develop specific pedagogical competencies to address different learning needs. Similarly, Sharma (2018) argues that insufficient preparation in inclusive practices remains a major barrier to effective inclusion. These findings suggest that teacher education programs may still lack alignment with inclusive education policies and classroom realities.

Institutional and administrative demands also emerged as important challenges during teachers' integration into public schools. Participants described experiencing a heavy workload that included reports, paperwork, lesson planning, and compliance with institutional regulations, which often reduced the time available for instructional activities. Ingersoll (2003) identifies administrative workload as a factor affecting teachers' professional experiences and retention.

Likewise, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) explain that excessive bureaucratic responsibilities can negatively influence teachers' motivation and instructional effectiveness. The findings indicate that administrative duties frequently interfere with pedagogical practice in public-school contexts.

Teachers also identified several classroom-related difficulties, including overcrowded classrooms, low English proficiency levels, discipline problems, and limited student motivation. Harmer (2007) explains that large and heterogeneous classrooms create important challenges for language teaching, especially when teachers must address students with different proficiency levels simultaneously. In addition, the findings highlighted the influence of socio-economic conditions on student learning and classroom dynamics. According to OECD (2019), students' academic achievement and participation are strongly linked to their socio-economic background. Participants explained that factors such as family environment, lack of resources, and social inequalities negatively affected students' motivation and learning experiences.

Another significant finding was the perceived inconsistency between curriculum expectations and the realities of public-school classrooms. Teachers reported that institutional requirements and curriculum objectives often failed to correspond with students' actual English proficiency and contextual conditions. Fullan (2007) argues that educational reforms tend to be ineffective

when they are implemented without considering the practical realities of classrooms. Likewise, Wedell (2009) emphasizes that successful curriculum implementation depends on alignment between educational policies, teacher preparation, and contextual factors. The results of this study therefore highlight the existing disconnect between curriculum demands and the everyday conditions faced by teachers and students in Ecuadorian public schools.

The results of this study suggest several important implications for teacher education and institutional support. Teacher preparation programs should strengthen practice-based learning opportunities and provide greater exposure to authentic school environments before graduation. Greater emphasis should also be placed on classroom management, inclusive education strategies, administrative responsibilities, and contextual awareness. Furthermore, the importance of continuous professional development identified by participants supports Day's (1999) argument that ongoing learning is essential for teachers to adapt to evolving educational demands.

Despite its contributions, this study presents certain limitations. The research involved only three participants, which limits the transferability of findings to broader educational contexts. In addition, the study was conducted within a specific geographical context in Ecuador, meaning that the experiences described may not fully represent teachers from other regions or educational systems. The findings are also based on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by participants' personal experiences and subjective interpretations. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable insights into teachers' perceived preparedness and highlights relevant areas for improvement in teacher education and institutional support systems.

Based on these findings, future research could expand the number of participants and include teachers from diverse educational and geographical contexts to obtain a broader understanding of teacher preparedness. Longitudinal studies examining how teachers' perceptions evolve over time would also contribute valuable insights into professional adaptation processes. Additionally, future studies could explore specific topics such as inclusive education, institutional adaptation, and administrative demands in greater depth to better understand the professional realities faced by English teachers in public-school contexts.

Conclusion

This study examined English teachers' perceptions regarding their preparedness to face the pedagogical and institutional demands of Ecuadorian public schools. The findings revealed a

noticeable gap between the theoretical preparation provided by teacher education programs and the practical realities teachers encounter during their professional integration. Participants particularly identified difficulties related to classroom management, inclusive education, and responding to diverse student needs.

The study also showed that teachers face considerable institutional and administrative responsibilities that frequently limit their ability to concentrate on instructional practices. Additionally, contextual challenges such as large class sizes, low levels of student English proficiency, and limited educational resources increase the complexity of teaching in public-school environments. These findings demonstrate that teacher preparedness involves not only pedagogical knowledge, but also institutional understanding and contextual adaptation.

Furthermore, the research contributes to the understanding of teacher preparedness as a contextual and experience-based process shaped by both academic training and school realities. The results highlight the importance of strengthening teacher education programs through greater emphasis on practice-based learning, inclusive education strategies, and support systems for novice teachers during their induction into public institutions.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for stronger alignment between teacher education programs and the contextual demands of public education systems. Improving this connection may facilitate teachers' professional adaptation and contribute to enhancing the quality of English language teaching in Ecuadorian public schools.

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