



Desafíos de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) tras la pandemia: un estudio de caso en escuelas públicas de Chunchi, Ecuador

Challenges of teaching EFL post-pandemic: A case study in public schools of Chunchi, Ecuador

Desafios de ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) após a pandemia: um estudo de caso em escolas públicas de Chunchi, Equador

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Resumen

La pandemia de COVID-19 desencadenó profundas transformaciones en los sistemas educativos a nivel mundial, afectando particularmente la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en escuelas públicas rurales. El objetivo del estudio fue examinar los principales desafíos pospandemia que enfrentan los docentes de EFL en escuelas públicas de Chunchi, Ecuador. Se empleó un diseño de investigación descriptiva transversal con 35 docentes de inglés de entornos urbanos y rurales. Los datos se recopilaban mediante un cuestionario estructurado basado en una escala Likert de 5 puntos. Para el análisis de datos se utilizaron estadísticas descriptivas y GraphPad Prism. Los resultados revelaron que los desafíos más críticos incluyen la reducción de cinco a tres horas semanales de instrucción de inglés y los frecuentes cambios curriculares implementados sin el apoyo adecuado. Estos factores han obstaculizado significativamente el logro de los objetivos curriculares, afectando la comprensión de los estudiantes. El estudio concluye que las limitaciones estructurales, en especial la reducción del tiempo lectivo y las reformas curriculares abruptas, agravan las dificultades de la enseñanza del EFL en contextos rurales. Esta investigación aporta información valiosa para los responsables políticos y educadores que buscan mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza del EFL en entornos rurales.

Palabras clave: Instrucción del inglés como lengua extranjera; enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera; educación pospandémica; escuelas públicas rurales; desarrollo profesional docente; reducción del tiempo lectivo.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered profound transformations in education systems worldwide, particularly affecting the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in rural public schools. The objective of this study was to examine the main post-pandemic challenges faced by EFL teachers in public schools in Chunchi, Ecuador. A cross-sectional descriptive research design was used with 35 English teachers from urban and rural settings. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics and GraphPad Prism were used for data analysis. The results revealed that the most critical challenges include the reduction from five to three hours of weekly English instruction and the frequent curricular changes implemented without adequate support. These factors have significantly hampered the achievement of curricular objectives, affecting student understanding. The study concludes that structural constraints,

particularly reduced instructional time and abrupt curriculum reforms, exacerbate the challenges of EFL teaching in rural contexts. This research provides valuable information for policymakers and educators seeking to improve the quality of EFL teaching in rural settings.

Keywords: English as a foreign language instruction; English as a foreign language teaching; post-pandemic education; rural public schools; teacher professional development; reduced instructional time.

Resumo

A pandemia da COVID-19 desencadeou profundas transformações nos sistemas educacionais em todo o mundo, afetando particularmente o ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) em escolas públicas rurais. O objetivo deste estudo foi examinar os principais desafios pós-pandemia enfrentados por professores de EFL em escolas públicas em Chunchi, Equador. Um delineamento de pesquisa descritiva transversal foi usado com 35 professores de inglês de ambientes urbanos e rurais. Os dados foram coletados usando um questionário estruturado com base em uma escala Likert de 5 pontos. Estatísticas descritivas e GraphPad Prism foram usados para análise de dados. Os resultados revelaram que os desafios mais críticos incluem a redução de cinco para três horas semanais de instrução de inglês e as frequentes mudanças curriculares implementadas sem suporte adequado. Esses fatores dificultaram significativamente o alcance dos objetivos curriculares, afetando a compreensão dos alunos. O estudo conclui que restrições estruturais, particularmente a redução da carga horária e reformas curriculares abruptas, agravam os desafios do ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira em contextos rurais. Esta pesquisa fornece informações valiosas para formuladores de políticas e educadores que buscam melhorar a qualidade do ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira em ambientes rurais.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira; ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira; educação pós-pandemia; escolas públicas rurais; desenvolvimento profissional de professores; redução da carga horária.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented changes to global education systems, not only in terms of teaching modalities but also curriculum adjustments, teacher preparedness, and access

equity (Bozkurt et al., 2020). In Ecuador, especially in rural areas, these challenges have become more pronounced with the return to in-person classes (Aboites et al., 2020)

In Ecuador, the post-pandemic educational landscape has been shaped by a series of institutional reforms that have further complicated the teaching of English in public schools. In 2016, through Ministerial Agreement No. MINEDUC-ME-2016-00020-A, the Ministry of Education established the mandatory inclusion of English instruction at all levels of General Basic Education (EGB) and the Unified General Baccalaureate (BGU). This regulation allocated three instructional hours per week in the initial levels and five hours per week in the upper levels of Basic Education and Baccalaureate, with content aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016)

However, in March 2022, the Ministry issued a new regulation, Ministerial Agreement No. MINEDUC-2022-00010-A modified the national curriculum by reducing English instruction to three hours per week in both Basic Superior and Baccalaureate levels, thereby repealing the previous agreement (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2022). According to Cervantes-Intriago (2023), this measure negatively impacted the teaching and learning of English by limiting the time available for developing language skills and achieving curriculum coverage. These structural changes have raised concerns about students' right to equitable and high-quality education, particularly in marginalized or rural areas (Medranda Arango & Llor Mera, 2024)

Quishpe et al., (2022) point out that the reduction in class hours for English teaching significantly undermines the development of the linguistic competencies outlined in the national curriculum. This decrease in weekly instructional time places considerable pressure on teachers, who are often compelled to cover content superficially or omit certain units altogether. As a result, learning gaps emerge that hinder students' language acquisition processes. Furthermore, the Ecuadorian education system has undergone multiple curricular transitions in recent years. In 2016, the Integrated Curriculum was introduced; during the pandemic, the Prioritized Curriculum was adopted; and currently, the Competency-Based National Curriculum is in effect. According to the Ministry of Education these curricular shifts aim to improve educational quality, respond to emerging social and economic challenges, and promote a more inclusive pedagogical model. However, García Guzmán (2024), argues that the frequency of these changes reflects a pattern of curricular instability, which has posed significant adaptation challenges for educators, particularly due to the lack of adequate training to support the implementation of these reforms.

On the other hand, with the creation of the Ministry of Telecommunications in 2008, the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Ecuador's education sector reflected a significant shift in educational paradigms, supported by an investment of 4.62% of the national GDP. This initiative aimed to transform schools from traditional content delivery centers into spaces where teachers facilitated student-centered learning. Efforts included the nationwide distribution of computers to public school teachers and the installation of internet connectivity in state-run institutions (Mendoza-Bozada, 2020)

According to Datosmacro, (2020), by 2019, Ecuador experienced a significant decline in public investment in education. Specifically, educational spending accounted for 4.23% of the national GDP, representing a decrease of 0.39 percentage points compared to 2018, when it reached 4.62%. This reduction negatively impacted the country's position in international rankings. Notably, Ecuador dropped from 79th to 89th place out of 192 countries in the ranking based on educational spending as a percentage of GDP.

As Palacios-Dueñas et al., (2020) points out, this reduction in investment was particularly evident in the area of educational technology. The lack of acquisition of new equipment and infrastructure marked a setback in the progress made in previous years, limiting the modernization efforts that had previously been undertaken.

This decline became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when virtual learning became the primary mode of instruction. The abrupt transition exposed significant digital inequalities, especially in rural and marginalized areas, where many students lacked the technological resources necessary to participate effectively in distance education (UNESCO, 2021).

According to Padilla Eras (2024), the return to in-person education in 2021 was welcomed with optimism; however, significant inequalities persisted, particularly in rural areas where many schools still lack basic services such as clean water, electricity, and internet access. These deficiencies hinder the creation of safe and equitable learning environments and stand in stark contrast to the official narrative of progress, revealing deeply rooted structural inequalities within the Ecuadorian education system. In the same vein, Guapulema Ocampo et al., (2024) point out that the reduction in technological investment since 2019, coupled with insufficient teacher training, has significantly widened the digital and pedagogical divide in the public education system.

Considering this context, the present study acquires particular relevance as it investigates the post-pandemic challenges associated with teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in rural areas. Specifically, it focuses on the experiences of English teachers in public schools in Chunchi during the post-pandemic period (2022–2024), emphasizing pedagogical difficulties, digital transitions, and teacher training. The research is structured around three key dimensions. First, it addresses pedagogical challenges arising from the reduction in instructional hours, the absence of English textbooks since 2017 Ecuavisa (2025), and the recurrent curricular reforms introduced by the Ministry of Education. Second, it examines the effects of the digital transition, particularly regarding limited access to technological resources and unstable internet connectivity. Third, it analyzes the current state of teacher professional development, highlighting both the existing training gaps and the urgent need for continuous support to strengthen instructional practices in rural contexts.

The reviewed literature reveals that post-pandemic EFL teaching in Chunchi's public schools is significantly affected by pedagogical, technological, and professional development challenges. Factors such as reduced instructional hours, curricular instability, limited digital access, and insufficient teacher training hinder effective teaching. These issues underscore the importance of examining how such systemic conditions influence educators' practices. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the main challenges English teachers face in this rural context between 2022 and 2024.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design, which is appropriate for exploring and analyzing the current conditions, perceptions, and challenges faced by English teachers in the post-pandemic educational context of Chunchi, Ecuador. This design allows for the collection of data at a specific point in time, capturing the immediate effects of systemic changes in education following the COVID-19 pandemic. The target population consisted of English teachers working in public schools in Chunchi, Ecuador. These schools are located in urban and rural cantons in the Chimborazo province.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The sample comprised 35 English language teachers, selected through non-probability convenience sampling. The participants were from urban and rural public schools in the canton of Chunchi. The age of participants ranged from 25 to 55 years. This method was chosen based on the accessibility of participants and the availability of reliable contact information. Although the sample is not statistically representative, it provides valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by English teachers in the local context.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The instrument consisted of 32 items divided into four thematic sections: (1) demographic data, (2) curriculum implementation, (3) technological access and use, and (4) teacher training and perceptions of post-pandemic teaching challenges. Most items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” A sample item included: “I feel adequately trained to implement the new EFL curriculum post-pandemic.”

The instrument was developed in Spanish and later translated into English for academic dissemination, following back-translation procedures to ensure conceptual equivalence.

The survey instrument was developed specifically for this study and underwent content validation by two experts in education, who reviewed the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the items with the research objectives. Revisions were made based on their feedback to enhance validity and ensure that the survey appropriately captured the key dimensions under investigation.

Data were collected between April and May 2025. Participants were invited through the link to the Google Forms survey was sent via message to the English teacher’s cell phones. A digital consent form was included at the beginning of the survey, and participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were assured of anonymity and the confidentiality of their data. Two reminders were sent during the data collection period to increase participation.

Ethical considerations

This study complied with ethical standards regarding voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent. At the beginning of the Google Forms survey, participants were presented with a brief informed consent outlining the study’s purpose, the importance of their contribution, and the anonymous and confidential treatment of their responses.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time without consequences. By completing the survey, participants gave informed consent. All collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes and analyzed anonymously to ensure participant privacy. Contact information for the researcher was provided for any questions or concerns.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, were used to summarize participants' responses. GraphPad Prism version 10.0.0 for Mac OS X (GraphPad Software, Boston, Massachusetts, USA) was used for data analysis. www.graphpad.com. The analysis was aligned with the research objectives to identify key challenges related to curriculum implementation, technological access, and teacher training

Results

Participant Demographics

The survey sample comprised 35 English language teachers, with a notable majority being female participants (71%, $n = 25$) compared to male teachers, who made up 29% ($n = 10$). Regarding age distribution, the largest segment of respondents fell within the 35 to 44 age range (37%, $n = 13$), followed by those aged 25 to 34 (23%, $n = 8$). Participants aged 45 to 54 and those over 55 represented 11% ($n = 4$) of the sample, while only one respondent (3%) was under 25.

Regarding their place of residence, 43% ($n = 15$) of the teachers indicated that they lived permanently in Chunchi, while 14% ($n = 5$) resided there only during weekdays. A small fraction (3%, $n = 1$) lived at their workplace, and 40% ($n = 14$) reported living in other areas and commuting to their institutions daily.

In terms of employment status, just over half of the participants (51%, $n = 18$) were employed under civil contracts, while 26% ($n = 9$) held permanent teaching positions, and 23% ($n = 8$) worked under provisional contracts. Lastly, concerning the institutional setting, 51% ($n = 18$) of teachers were employed in urban schools, while 20% ($n = 7$) taught in rural institutions.

Table 1: Participants' characterizations

	N=35	%
Sex		
Female	25	71
Male	10	29
Age		
25-34 years	8	23
35-44 years	13	37
45-54 years	4	11
over 55 years old	4	11
under 25	1	3
Residence Place		
Chunchi	15	43
Monday to Friday in Chunchi	5	14
Workplace living	1	3
Living Elsewhere and Travel Daily	14	40
Teacher Contract type		
Civil Contract	18	51
Definitive contract	9	26
Provisional contract	8	23
Institutional Urbanization type		
Rural	7	20
Urban	18	51

Post-Pandemic Pedagogical Challenges in English Language Instruction

The findings highlight several challenges public school English teachers encountered following the COVID-19 pandemic. The most frequently reported issue was the reduction of weekly instructional hours from five to three, as noted by 77% of participants ($n = 27$) (see Figure 1A). Additionally, 23% ($n = 8$) reported insufficient English textbooks the Ministry of Education provided. This reduction in teaching hours led to eliminating or compressing key curriculum topics, which hindered the achievement of curriculum objectives. Most teachers (57%, $n = 20$) said this negatively affected the educational process. In comparison, 31% ($n = 11$) reported slowing down the pace of instruction, making content comprehension more challenging for students. In contrast, only 11% ($n = 4$) claimed that the reduction had little impact, noting that they had implemented time-optimization strategies to adapt.

Perceived risks to the quality of teaching were also significant. Eighty-six percent of respondents expressed concern about the impact of reduced instructional hours on English education, with 63%

strongly agreeing and 23% agreeing that this posed a substantial risk. Regarding the transition to the new post-pandemic curriculum (see Figure 1D), 37% ($n = 13$) described the adjustment as moderately complex, while 26% ($n = 9$) found it very difficult, and 17% ($n = 6$) considered it extremely difficult. These responses suggest that over 70% of teachers encountered significant challenges adapting to the revised curriculum.

Regarding the shortage of printed materials (see Figure 1E), 49% ($n = 17$) reported that the lack of textbooks complicated lesson planning, while 26% ($n = 9$) noted that it hindered progress toward curriculum goals. Furthermore, 17% ($n = 6$) invested time in creating adapted instructional materials, and 9% ($n = 3$) personally financed the acquisition of printed resources.

The academic impact of missing materials was also evident (see Figure 1F). A notable 71% ($n = 25$) believed that the absence of textbooks impeded students' comprehension of content and skill acquisition, while 17% ($n = 6$) observed a decline in student motivation. Only 11% ($n = 4$) indicated that the lack of materials had no significant effect on student academic performance.

Figure 1. Post-pandemic pedagogical difficulties. 1A: Post-pandemic teaching problems for teachers. 1B: Impact on content delivery due to reduced workload. 1C: Reduced hours and a risk to teaching quality. 1D: Difficulty adapting to the new curriculum. 1E: Impact of the lack of printed books. 1F: Impact of the lack of printed books on student performance.

Impact of the Digital Transition on English Language Teaching

The findings indicate a predominantly positive perception among English teachers regarding integrating technology into public education. A significant majority of respondents (63%; $n = 22$) strongly agreed that access to educational technology enhances the quality of English instruction, while an additional 31% ($n = 11$) expressed agreement. Only 6% ($n = 2$) reported a neutral opinion, suggesting a strong consensus on the beneficial impact of digital tools in foreign language teaching (refer to Figure 2A).

Regarding digital training, 43% ($n = 15$) of teachers reported having received instruction through independent courses offered by universities or educational institutions. In comparison, 29% ($n = 10$) participated in programs sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Additionally, 17% ($n = 6$) were self-taught, utilizing webinars or social media resources. However, 11% ($n = 4$) had not received any training, underscoring disparities in access to professional development (see Figure 2B). Regarding device usage, 69% ($n = 24$) reported using computers alongside other technological tools (e.g., mobile phones, projectors, speakers), reflecting a widespread adoption of digital

resources. Conversely, 11% ($n = 4$) did not incorporate technology into their classes, while 6% ($n = 2$) relied solely on mobile phones. Other combinations of devices were reported less frequently (see Figure 2C). Concerning academic qualifications, 68% of participants had formal English language teaching training, including 54% ($n = 19$) holding a bachelor's degree and 14% ($n = 5$) possessing a master's degree. An additional 20% ($n = 7$) held degrees in other fields, while 3% ($n = 1$) reported a background in engineering (see Figure 2D).

These results demonstrate high digital engagement and favorable attitudes toward integrating technology among English teachers. Nevertheless, they also highlight systemic barriers—such as unequal access to training and limited institutional infrastructure—that impede a fully effective digital transition in public education.

Figure 2. Digital transition in English teaching. 2A. Adequate access to educational technology; 2B. Digital tools training; 2C. Use of technological devices in the classroom; 2D Teacher training.

Professional Training and Continuing Development Needs Among English Teachers

The study examined essential aspects of professional qualifications, teaching experience, training needs, and barriers to ongoing professional development among English language teachers in the post-pandemic context.

Concerning international English language certification, 31% of participants ($n = 11$) reported not holding any certification, while 26% ($n = 9$) possessed credentials categorized as "Other." Among specific certifications, 17% ($n = 6$) held the IELTS, 14% ($n = 5$) reported having the iTEP, 9% ($n = 3$) had the TOEFL, and only 3% ($n = 1$) held the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT). These findings indicate that a significant portion of the teaching population lacks formal validation of their language proficiency. In terms of professional experience, 43% ($n = 15$) of respondents reported having over 10 years of teaching experience. This was followed by 31% ($n = 11$) with 2 to 5 years of experience, 20% ($n = 7$) with 6 to 10 years, and only 6% ($n = 2$) with less than 2 years of experience teaching English as a foreign language.

Considering areas for professional improvement, 51% ($n = 18$) identified the need to strengthen core English language skills, such as grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary development, as a primary training need. Furthermore, 34% ($n = 12$) stressed the importance of pedagogical training in English language teaching methodologies, while 23% ($n = 8$) expressed the need for development in classroom management and inclusive education strategies. Notably, only 11% ($n = 4$) indicated a need for training in digital competencies, including using educational

platforms and applications to enhance instruction. Regarding barriers to accessing professional development, the most frequently cited obstacle was a lack of time (46%; $n = 16$), often due to the challenges of balancing teaching responsibilities with personal and academic commitments. Financial constraints were also significant, with 23% ($n = 8$) reporting costs as a limiting factor. Additionally, 20% ($n = 7$) cited limited access to educational resources, including materials and training platforms. Only 3% ($n = 1$) reported not needing further training.

These findings highlight a clear demand among English teachers for improved language proficiency and pedagogical training and systemic barriers that hinder participation in continuous professional development. Addressing these challenges is essential to supporting effective, equitable, and sustainable English language education in the post-pandemic era.

Figure 3. Professional development and continuing education needs of English teachers. 3A. International teacher certification. 3B. Years of experience teaching English. 3C. Training requirements to strengthen teacher performance. 3D. Main barriers to professional development.

Discussion

This study identified various challenges faced by English teachers in public schools in Chunchi in the post-pandemic period, focusing on the reduction of class hours, scarcity of instructional materials, constant curricular changes, technological integration, and teacher professional development. The findings reveal that the reduction in weekly English instruction from five to three hours has significantly limited both the scope and depth of content coverage. Additionally, teachers face difficulties accessing printed materials such as English textbooks, which has negatively affected the quality and continuity of the teaching-learning process. Although teachers expressed a positive attitude toward technological integration, persistent gaps in training and infrastructure access continue to exacerbate digital inequity.

Similarly, Christ et al., (2024) reported that during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers across Latin America experienced persistent challenges related to lack of resources, increased workloads, and the need to adapt to new teaching modalities without sufficient institutional support. Their 20-country study highlights how these conditions impacted the quality of education and teacher well-being, findings that closely align with the challenges identified in the rural Ecuadorian context.

Comparative studies in rural contexts of Indonesia and China also reflect similar challenges in English language teaching, particularly during and after the pandemic. Kusuma (2022) found that despite limited connectivity and low student motivation, Indonesian teachers implemented effective technological adaptations to continue English instruction. Similarly, (Guo et al., 2022) reported that collaborative remote teaching in rural Chinese schools achieved moderate success but encountered similar barriers, such as insufficient teacher training, lack of digital devices, and unequal access to online resources. These international findings coincide with the technological challenges identified in Chunchi but also suggest that with sustained policy support and pedagogical adaptations, the structural limitations affecting English learning can be mitigated.

In the Latin American context, research by (Ramos Holguín & Aguirre Morales, 2018) in rural Colombian areas highlights structural issues comparable to the Ecuadorian context, including the lack of resources, instructional materials, and continuous professional development for English teachers. However, the study also emphasizes teacher resilience, as many educators implement alternative strategies to address pedagogical and motivational challenges. This proactive attitude is reflected in the testimonies of some teachers in Chunchi, who expressed a willingness to improve their practice, though their efforts remain constrained by the lack of institutional support. This comparison underscores the need to recognize and institutionalize such resilient practices through training programs tailored to rural settings.

The study by Banegas et al., (2024), conducted in Argentinian public secondary schools, reveals that both in-service and pre-service English teachers conceptualize social justice in language education as a practice grounded in contextual relevance and active student participation. Through collaborative action research, participants developed materials and activities addressing locally significant issues such as bullying and gender discrimination, thereby fostering situated and meaningful learning. However, they also encountered tensions when addressing politically sensitive topics, highlighting the challenges of balancing critical pedagogy with institutional constraints. These findings complement the results of the present study in Chunchi, Ecuador, where rural EFL teachers face structural challenges, including a reduction in instructional hours and a lack of didactic resources. Both studies underscore the need for educational policies that not only address material limitations but also promote teacher autonomy and the capacity to adapt English instruction to local sociocultural realities, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and context-sensitive language education.

Moreover, the study by Lucero Chillagana et al., (2023) which focused on a rural school in Latacunga, Ecuador, reveals findings consistent with the present research, such as the shortage of didactic resources, inadequate school infrastructure, and low student motivation. Both studies underscore the urgent need to improve material conditions and teacher training in rural English education. However, while the Latacunga context highlights a shortage of specialized English teachers, in Chunchi, most English teachers possess formal training in EFL. Nevertheless, this academic advantage does not necessarily translate into substantial improvements in teaching quality. This discrepancy is mainly due to structural factors that hinder teacher performance, including reduced instructional time and the lack of adequate teaching resources. Therefore, the study concludes that teacher training, although essential, is insufficient unless accompanied by structural conditions that enable its effective implementation in the classroom.

This research offers a meaningful contribution to the understanding of English language teaching in rural areas of Ecuador, providing updated evidence of the educational consequences of the post-pandemic period. By focusing on the real conditions faced by English teachers, this analysis offers deeper insights into the structural and pedagogical challenges that persist in these environments, such as reduced instruction time, limited didactic resources, and technological infrastructure constraints. Accordingly, the findings highlight the urgent need for educational reforms that include the redistribution of instructional time for English, sustained investment in digital infrastructure, and inclusive policy reforms that strengthen teacher professional development. While this study acknowledges methodological limitations inherent to its scope, the results provide a solid foundation for the formulation of more context-sensitive public policies and for the development of future research aimed at improving English education quality in similar rural contexts.

Nevertheless, despite its relevance, this study presents methodological limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size was small, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other rural regions of the country. Furthermore, the data were primarily collected through self-reports, which may be subject to perception bias. For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal and comparative studies across different provinces, incorporating mixed methods that include direct observation, in-depth interviews, and student performance analysis to gain a broader and more accurate understanding of English language teaching in rural environments (Creswell, 2018).

Conclusion

This study reveals that English teachers in public schools of Chunchi, Ecuador, face persistent post-pandemic challenges, including reduced instructional hours, limited access to materials, uneven digital infrastructure, and barriers to professional development. Despite teachers' qualifications and resilience, systemic issues continue to hinder EFL teaching quality. The findings underscore the need for urgent, context-specific reforms focused on equitable resource distribution, technological investment, and targeted teacher training. While the study's scope limits generalization, it provides valuable insights to inform educational policy and future research aimed at improving EFL instruction in rural settings.

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