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Enhancing English Teaching in Venezuela: A Decade of Collaboration Between the British Council and the Ministry of Education

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The British Council particularly recognises the dedication of the authorities, academic teams, coordinators, facilitators, and teachers who made it possible for these initiatives to reach thousands of Venezuelan educators. The achievements reflected in this report are the result of a collective effort and demonstrate the value of inter-institutional collaboration in generating sustainable transformations in state education.

With gratitude, we celebrate the progress achieved and hope that this experience continues to inspire new opportunities for cooperation to benefit future generations of Venezuelan teachers and students.

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Acronyms

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

DIPELT: *Diplomado en la Enseñanza del Inglés para Primaria* (Teaching English to Young Learners Diploma)

ELT: English Language Teaching

EPI: English Proficiency Index

IB: International Baccalaureate

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

MPPE: *Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación* (Ministry of Education)

PNF: *Programa Nacional de Formación* (National Training Programme)

PNFA: *Programa Nacional de Formación Avanzada* (National Advanced Training Programme)

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

UK: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

UNEM: *Universidad Nacional Experimental del Magisterio "Samuel Robinson"* (Samuel Robinson National Experimental Teaching University)

UPEL: *Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador* (Experimental Libertador Pedagogical University)

Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive overview of the evolution, implementation, and impact of English language teacher training programmes in Venezuela, with a particular focus on initiatives developed after 2015. It traces the historical context of English teaching in both public and private sectors, highlighting curricular shifts, institutional efforts, and the emergence of targeted professional development strategies.

Central to the report is the analysis of the National Training Programme in Secondary Education in Foreign Languages, designed to strengthen pedagogical practices among English teachers in public secondary schools. The programme emphasised student-centred methodologies, inclusive education, and the development of communicative competencies aligned with 21st-century skills.

Drawing from classroom observations, facilitator insights, and informal conversations with students, the report explores how participating teachers adapted their practices, overcame challenges, and fostered more engaging learning environments. Case studies of individual teachers illustrate diverse professional journeys, showcasing how the programme supported both novice and experienced educators in refining their approach to teaching English.

The report also examines the cascading effect of the programme across multiple cohorts, the role of facilitators, and the integration of supplementary materials such as radio programmes and digital resources. While acknowledging limitations, such as structural constraints, resistance to change, and resource scarcity, it underscores the transformative potential of sustained, context-sensitive teacher training.

Ultimately, this document serves as both a reflection on past efforts and a roadmap for future initiatives. It advocates for continued investment in teacher development, greater inter-institutional collaboration, and the expansion of training models that prioritize equity, relevance, and innovation in English language education.

1. Methodology

This report is based on a qualitative, descriptive approach aimed at documenting and analysing the experiences of English language teachers participating in national training programmes in Venezuela. The methodology combines document analysis, classroom observations, informal interviews, and participant narratives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the programme's implementation and impact.

1.1 Data Collection Methods

1.1.1 Document Review

Official programme materials, training modules, institutional reports, and participant autobiographies were analysed to understand the structure, content, and pedagogical focus of the training initiatives.

1.1.2 Classroom Observations

Observers visited selected public secondary schools to witness teaching practices firsthand. These visits focused on lesson delivery, student engagement, classroom layout, and the integration of strategies promoted by the training programme.

1.1.3 Informal Interviews and Conversations

While no formal interviews or surveys were conducted with students, observers engaged in informal conversations during school visits. These exchanges provided valuable insights into student perceptions of the changes introduced by trained teachers.

1.1.4 Case Studies

Detailed profiles of selected teachers were developed to illustrate individual journeys through the training programme. These case studies highlight personal backgrounds, teaching contexts, challenges faced, and transformations in practice.

1.1.5 Facilitator Input

Reflections and feedback from programme facilitators were considered to understand the support mechanisms, instructional strategies, and challenges encountered during implementation

Methods of Data Collection

- Document Review
- Classroom Observations
- Interviews and Informal Conversations
- Case Studies
- Facilitator Input

1.2 Scope and Limitations

The study focuses primarily on teachers working in public secondary schools across various regions of Venezuela. While the findings offer rich qualitative insights, they are not intended to be statistically generalizable. Limitations include the absence of formal student assessments, restricted access to some schools due to logistical constraints, and variability in programme delivery across cohorts.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a robust foundation for understanding the lived experiences of teachers and the evolving landscape of English language teaching in Venezuela.



2. Introduction

Over the past decade, the British Council and the Ministry of Education in Venezuela have worked in close partnership to strengthen English language teaching across the country's public education system. This collaboration has resulted in two major training programmes aimed at improving the pedagogical and linguistic competencies of both generalist primary school teachers in 4th, 5th and 6th grade and specialist secondary school English teachers.







The first initiative, launched in 2015, focused on equipping generalist teachers, who had no prior knowledge of English, with the foundational skills needed to teach the English language in Grades 4 to 6. This programme evolved from earlier efforts such as the *Diplomado en la Enseñanza del Inglés para primaria* -Teaching English to Young Learners Diploma (DIPELT) and was integrated into the *Programa Nacional de Formación Avanzada* - National Advanced Training Program (PNFA) "English for Primary," later becoming part of the postgraduate offerings of the *Universidad Nacional Experimental del Magisterio "Samuel Robinson"* - Samuel Robinson National Experimental Teaching University (UNEM)

The second programme, initiated in 2021, focused secondary school English teachers and was delivered entirely online, using the innovative platform application of Telegram to overcome infrastructural challenges. With a modular structure and a flipped learning approach, this programme emphasised inclusive practices, teacher resilience, and the development of future trainers through its module no. 10 (of 12 modules).

Together, these programmes have reached teachers in all 24 states of Venezuela, navigating complex socio-economic conditions and demonstrating the transformative power of sustained, context-sensitive professional development.

3. Teaching of English in Venezuela before 2015

English has traditionally been present in the educational system of Venezuela. However, its presence has varied depending on the level: pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary; and depending on the sector: public and private sector.

Pre-Primary **Primary** **Secondary** **Tertiary**

3.1 Public sector

3.1.1 Curriculum

In Venezuela, English has been part of the national curriculum since the 1940s, reflecting the country's growing engagement with global communication and technological advancement. The National Curriculum reforms between 1980 and 1997 formally established English as a compulsory subject in secondary education, emphasizing its role in intercultural communication and access to scientific and technical knowledge. These reforms were influenced by broader educational trends, including the rise of educational technology and constructivist approaches to learning. According to the British Council's *English Teaching Profile: Venezuela*, English was seen not only as a tool for international exchange but also as a strategic asset for national development, particularly in science, diplomacy, and commerce.

In 2007, for the first time English was included in the curriculum for primary schools, specifically for Grades 4-6. As it was mentioned by Pérez (2015), "...The Bolivarian Educational System (*Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación MPPE, 2007*) establishes that English should be taught starting from the fourth grade of primary education..." (p.17)[1]

Despite the fact that English content was included in the National Curriculum for grades 4, 5 and 6 in primary, the implementation had not been possible in many cases because: a) there were no further guidelines from the Ministry of Education on how this was going to be implemented, b) there were not enough English teachers in Venezuela to cover the secondary school classes that were already compulsory before 2007 and c) most generalist teachers did not know English or how to teach it.

The National Curriculum for decades had included English as a compulsory subject in secondary school. Students took English lessons for five years. However, the results were disappointing.

[1] Pérez, T. (2015) *"...The Bolivarian Educational System (MPPE, 2007) states that English is to be taught from the fourth grade of primary education..."* (p.17)

In 2018, the Goethe Institut carried out a survey of 5,500 secondary school students, university students or workers between 14 and 25 years old aimed to explore their perceptions of educational opportunities, satisfaction with the education system, the value and usefulness of foreign languages, and their past or anticipated experiences in nine countries of Latin America including Venezuela. Based on the data collected in Venezuela, they concluded that "for the acquisition of a foreign language, more than a quarter of people (surveyed) attended a private institute. Most (52%) acquired knowledge of the foreign language autodidactically"[2] (Goethe-Institut, 2018).

This mirrors the perception of Venezuelan students that they did not learn English in secondary school because of many factors including poor English language teaching methodology, a curriculum with not enough emphasis on practical language skills, limited resources, and little instruction time, discouraged teachers and students, among others. As a result, many students decide to learn on their own or look for private institutions to learn the language

3.1.2 Experieces

In different regions of Venezuela, there have been local or regional initiatives to introduce English in public primary schools.

- In Carabobo state, a feasible project started in 1998 to teach English in public primary schools. The programme taught English to students "between the ages of 7 and 12, carried out in 125 state public primary schools and extended to 14 municipalities in the state of Carabobo."[3] (Ojeda, E., 2015, p.123)
- A similar initiative started in 2006 in public primary schools of Barinas state. According to Salas, J. (2015),

English classes were conducted by a teacher known as an English Specialist in each public institution in the state of Barinas. However, in schools with a high student enrolment, two or three specialists worked together to ensure that each class received at least one hour of English instruction per week[4] (p. 117).

In Mérida, there was also a programme to include English teaching in public primary schools. According to Pulido, R. (2015) "The most important project aimed at teaching English in the primary schools of this state was 'English in Bolivarian Schools'... it included 26 public primary schools and 29 English teachers." (p. 131)[5]. The same author reports that this project began in the year 2000 and was still active by 2015.

[2] *"For the acquisition of a foreign language, more than a quarter of people attended a private institution. The majority (52%) acquired their foreign language knowledge through self-study."* (Goethe-Institut, 2018)

[3] *"7 and 12 years of age, which is carried out in 125 state-run public primary schools and has been extended to 14 municipalities in Carabobo State"* (Ojeda, E., 2015, p.123)

[4] *"Classes are taught by a teacher designated as an English Specialist in each public institution in Barinas State, although in institutions with a very high student enrolment, two or three specialists work to ensure that each class receives at least one hour of English instruction per week."* Salas, 2015, p. 117.

[5] Pulido, R. (2015) "*The most important project aimed at teaching English in the primary schools of this state is 'English in Bolivarian Schools'... it has 26 public primary schools and 29 English teachers.*" (p. 131)

In 2009, Táchira state started a project known as "*Enseñanza del inglés como una herramienta para conectar las escuelas al mundo intercultural*" ("Teaching English as a Tool to Connect Schools to the Intercultural World"). According to Chacón, C. (2015), this project took place in 38 schools of San Cristóbal -the capital city of Táchira state.

It is important to mention that all of these were local or regional initiatives coordinated by the local *Zona Educativa*[6] or the local government.

As of 2025, there are no available updates on these local initiatives. It remains unclear whether the programmes are still ongoing or have been discontinued, and if so, when and why.

3.1.3 Diploma in English Language Teaching (British Council – UPEL)

In the school year 2013-2014, the British Council Venezuela collaborated with the Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador (UPEL) to design and deliver DiPELT.

This Diploma focused on generalist primary school teachers who worked in the public sector. Its main aim was to train generalist teachers, so they were able to introduce basic English to their primary school students in 4th, 5th and 6th grade. This Diploma was offered in 8 venues in different regions of the country.

The programme consisted of 10 modules with 2 main components: English and teaching methodology. The English component aimed at teaching the generalist teachers basic vocabulary and structures that they could replicate with their students (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR A1). The teaching methodology component helped teachers understand and practice the methodology needed to introduce simple English in their classes.

This course was characterised for the emphasis on practice and reflection. Teachers met weekly to learn English, practice the teaching methodology with colleagues, and reflect about the application of techniques in their primary school classrooms.

DiPELT represented a first attempt to train teachers with the aim of incorporating English into primary education by preparing students and graduates in Education who had no knowledge of English or possessed a very low level. (Sagaray, Fernández y Rodríguez, 2017, p.229)[7].

The British Council and English Language Teaching (ELT)-Consultants reported that during the 2013–2014 school year, approximately 60 teacher trainers from UPEL were trained to deliver the DiPELT programme, and around 480 public primary school teachers graduated from DiPELT across eight regional venues. (Sagaray, Fernández and Arnold, 2022).

3.2 Private sector

3.2.1 Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Levels

The presence of English in Venezuela's private education sector is both widespread and strategic. At primary level, many private schools introduce English as early as pre-primary education, aiming to appeal to parents who view bilingualism as a valuable asset for their children's future. This early exposure is often marketed as a competitive advantage, especially in urban centres like Caracas, Valencia,

[6] A "*Zona Educativa*" is the regional office of the Ministry of Education in each state.

[7] "*DiPELT represents a first attempt to train teachers with the aim of introducing English into primary schools through the training of undergraduates and graduates in Integral Education with no knowledge of English, or with a very low level.*" (Sagaray, Fernández y Rodríguez, 2017, p.229)

and Maracaibo, where international influence and expatriate communities are more prominent.

At secondary level, private institutions frequently offer intensive English programmes, sometimes aligned with international curricula such as the British, American, or International Baccalaureate (IB) systems. These programmes often include native-speaking teachers, immersion techniques, and preparation for international exams like the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or other English international qualifications.

In tertiary education, private universities and technical institutes increasingly incorporate English into their curricula, particularly in fields such as business, engineering, and tourism.

According to Expat-Quotes(n.d.), “Some schools may follow the American or British curriculums with English-speaking programmes while others are regulated under the French and Italian language and system”. This diversity reflects the international orientation of many private institutions and their commitment to multilingual education

4. PNFA – Training Addressed to Generalist Teachers

4.1 The Programme

To continue the efforts to introduce English in the public primary sector, in 2015, the British Council Venezuela, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, started a programme to teach English in the 2nd level of primary (Grades 4, 5 and 6). This programme had as the foundation the DIPELT that had been run between 2013-2014 but this time, the training was part of the (PNFA) which originally depended on the Micromisión Simón Rodríguez and later would become a postgraduate course in the new university dependent from the Ministry of Education called UNEM.

The participants of this programme were generalist teachers who were in public schools teaching 4th, 5th or 6th grade. They had no initial knowledge of either the English language or the methodology to teach it. One of the programme goals was to increase the teachers’ level of English from CEFR A0 to A1, introducing basic vocabulary and structures that they would need to teach in the classroom. The other main aim was to share with participants basic English teaching methodology, based on the communicative approach, so they could introduce basic English as part of their lessons. Along with the face-to-face training, participants were asked to take an online English course to improve their English proficiency.

In Table 1, the numbers of tutors, facilitators, participants, children and schools involved per school year can be observed.

School Year	Cohort	Tutors	Facilitators	Participants	Children	Schools
2016-2017	I	16	60	443	14.936	437
2017-2018	II	24	132	969	22.640	902
2019-2020	III	24	163	1.115	27.865	905
2020-2021	IV	24	168	2.750	13.750	1.963

Table 1: PNFA number of tutors, facilitators, participants, children and schools per cohort

4.2 The Teachers

The teachers had a bachelor's degree in Education, majoring in primary school teaching in the public sector. They taught 4th, 5th or 6th grade and they were mostly newly graduated teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience. The teachers enrolled in this training as part of the post graduate courses offered by the *Micromisión Simón Rodríguez* which later became UNEM. These teachers were located in the 24 states of the country in urban and rural areas.

4.3 Facilitators

The facilitators were local trainers who belonged to *Micromisión Simón Rodríguez*, and later to UNEM. They were trained by UK trainers and delivered the lessons in pairs in each of the regions of the country. These facilitators were either English teachers or graduates from the *Programa Nacional de Formación* - National Programme Training (PNF).

4.4 The Classroom Observations and Interviews

"English in the Primary School" has been a valuable project for Venezuela. Through this project, hundreds of primary school teachers have had the chance to grow professionally and to innovate in their classrooms by introducing English to their students.

Teachers from each of the cohorts were observed in their classrooms and what prevailed in all the observations was the high motivation of children and teachers.

Students were eager to participate, they tried to use the language they were learning, they looked engaged in the activities and were willing to show what they knew.

The fact they were having the opportunity to learn something new that in normal conditions would have been difficult to experience due to the lack of an official policy to include English as a compulsory subject in primary school and the lack of English teachers to work in primary schools. The methodology used was based on songs, games, the use of attractive resources and practical learning which made it more motivating for students.

The teachers participating in the programme have expressed that their confidence grew during their teaching practice, and they felt they had more control of the class, as well as the bond with their students increased.

Thousands of children who were part of the project also expressed interest in learning the English language, and they showed high motivation and participation in all the activities. Parents of these children also expressed satisfaction and gratefulness for having this opportunity for their children.

School communities also took an active part. Principals, other subject teachers, cleaning staff, cooks, security personnel, and secretaries witnessed the enthusiasm shown by the children to learn English.

During the last year of the project, facilitators, teachers and students were forced to change their traditional view of teaching and adapt to the new times by teaching remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemics. Different ways of connecting with each other were found, defying the difficulties given by the country general conditions like electricity problems, deficient or inexistent internet connection, among others.

4.5 Materials and Radio Programmes

A series of English teaching materials were designed in the framework of this project. Student Books and Teacher's Books were designed for teaching 4th, 5th and 6th grades. A set of these publications were printed and distributed to the participants of the training so they were able to use them in their classrooms with students. The materials were also made available in digital format. Participants were also able to have access using a memory stick with all the materials.

The content of these books was designed by using a 'spiral curriculum' format by increasing the difficulty in each grade, following Bloom's taxonomy with different levels of thinking. All of the grades covered the same 5 topics: animals, us, health, geography and environment.

The five general topics selected were based on global good practice and appeared in most language learning curriculums. Four of the topics were based on the cross curricular subjects of science (animals, health, geography and environment). Each topic was re-visited each year in order to recycle the language and develop the concepts." (Arnold, W. p.155)

The student books were characterised by the presence of full-colour illustrations. Initially in Grade 4 little or no text was used as the emphasis was on developing oral skills (Listening and speaking). By Grade 6 text was incorporated but the emphasis remained in using 'visual literacy' with pictures to help the students process the concepts and link the text to meaning.

The teacher's books contain full lesson plans written in Spanish (the teachers' L1) and with the specific utterances in English that needed to be used in each session (greetings, simple instructions, language for praising and giving feedback and the target language of each specific lesson).

Each topic consists of six lessons: the first lesson is the introduction to the lexical set, lessons 2 to 5 are for practising the language and lesson 6 was a project in which students needed to produce the language they had learned in the previous five lessons.

Each lesson is presented in 4 parts of 15 minutes each, so the teacher has the flexibility to decide to deliver one to four parts during the same day or spread them over a few days. This flexibility allowed the teachers to make decisions on when and how to teach English in their classrooms without affecting their regular lessons.

Later on, to help trained teachers keep their knowledge fresh after the initial training, the target language presented in each lesson was recorded in an audio format. These recordings served as a reference for correct pronunciation. According to Hutchinson (2021) this content was presented as

> «A set of short dialogues, each four lines long, written and recorded by the British Council, covered each of the 75 lessons included in the three courses designed for classroom use in grades 4, 5, and 6. Each dialogue reinforced the key lexical elements introduced in each lesson and was also intended to provide both teachers and students with valuable comprehension exercises»[8]. (p.201)

The British Council also recorded a set of 10 videos demonstrating lessons contained in the lesson plans to provide examples for the teachers on how to teach different parts of the lesson based on the teaching methodology learned during the training.

In 2021, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were forced to close in Venezuela as in many other countries. In order to support the initiation of children in the learning of the English language, the British Council recorded a set of 75 radio programmes based on the contents of the books that had been designed for primary (animals, us, health, geography and environment). These programmes were based on the lessons for each grade, teaching its content in a dynamic and entertaining way using storytelling. The programmes were distributed among local radio stations which started broadcasting them as part of their regular products.

Furthermore, the British Council designed an app with the contents of these books for teachers and students to have access to the contents of the book in mobile phones. Demo videos were also recorded to demonstrate the use of the app.

[8] *"A series of short four-line dialogues, written and recorded by the British Council, covering each of the 75 lessons contained in the three courses designed for classroom use in grades 4, 5 and 6. Each dialogue reinforced the key lexical items introduced in every lesson and was also intended to provide both teachers and students with valuable listening comprehension exercises" (Hutchinson, 2021, p.201)*

4.6 The Cascading and Evolution of the Programme

The PNFA programme started the first cohort with the British Council training 45 local facilitators in September 2016, these facilitators were in charge of delivering the training in all states of Venezuela. These facilitators usually worked in pairs and were supported by a local tutor.

The facilitators of the first cohort were English teachers or PNF graduates, their main strength was that they knew the target language and some teaching methodology; but for the second cohort, there was an important change that added value to the programme, some participants who successfully completed the PNFA training programme were so motivated that they decided to become facilitators. These teachers knew

primary school students well and the classroom environment. For the second cohort the number of facilitators increased, and it was possible to open more groups in different locations. The distribution of facilitators was still in pairs but, when possible, the combination was an English teacher and a primary school teacher, yielding excellent results. In view of this phenomenon, the British Council organised a special training on mentoring for tutors and facilitators delivered by ELT Consultants from the United Kingdom (UK) in order to provide tools for experienced facilitators to accompany the new facilitators in this process.

A similar dynamic occurred for the third cohort, combining more experienced facilitators with new facilitators. All of these facilitators received regular training from ELT Consultants.

For the fourth cohort, the authorities of the UNEM decided to diversify the course to new and larger audiences so, after an evaluation of the training programme, they adapted it to become a compulsory course for participants taking advanced studies PNFA in the areas of primary and pre-primary as part of their courses.

4.7 Limitations and Challenges

The training focused on the teaching of English for grades 4, 5 and 6 which took place despite multiple limitations that were mainly external. When the teachers enrolled in the first, second and third cohort of this programme, the country was going through difficult times. Some of these teachers migrated to other countries in search of better economic conditions for them and their families.

When the fourth cohort was going to start, the COVID 19 pandemics forced schools to close and they started the programme online, with no resources and huge challenges for communication owing to lack of devices, poor electricity and weak or inexistent internet connection.

Regarding the training itself, some teachers found it hard to pronounce words with standard pronunciation. In order to mitigate this issue, a set of recordings was made to support teachers. Another challenge was the time and money teachers needed to create teaching resources like flashcards and wordcards. However, some teachers worked together with parents to collect recycled materials such as cardboard and paper, and some teachers worked together with the students to create the teaching resources for the classroom. The British Council designed, produced and distributed the classroom books in order to provide some visual aid for the delivery of the lessons.

5. PNF – Training Addressed to Secondary School Teachers in the Public Sector

5.1 Background

Since 2015, the British Council has supported the PNF programme by training its facilitators and tutors on English teaching methodology. For the past 10 years, the British Council has organised national training sessions bringing UK specialists to Venezuela to familiarise trainers with effective methodology to teach English as a foreign language.

ELT Consultants analysed the national Secondary coursebooks “My Victory”. These books were written, printed and distributed by the Ministry of Education in Venezuela in order to teach English in secondary schools. This analysis resulted in a training programme for teams of Venezuelan facilitators and tutors on how to use the classroom materials with students.

As a result of this analysis, there emerged the need to design lesson plans for English teachers so they could effectively deliver the content. The British Council in partnership with the Ministry of Education and with the expertise of ELT Consultants, designed lesson plans and complementary teaching materials such as flashcards, audios, posters, to provide secondary school teachers the tools to effectively use the “My Victory” books in their classrooms.

5.2 The Programme

After having experienced positive results with the programme to introduce English in the public primary school, it was time to have a closer look at the English teaching methodology in secondary schools.

For decades, English had been compulsory at secondary school; however, after taking 5 years of English lessons, most of the students do not show a mastery of the language. According to Chacón, C. (2005) “Despite the fact that English is taught as a compulsory subject in Venezuelan secondary schools, students often complete five or more years of instruction without achieving communicative competence in the language.”

Based on the findings of the English First (EF) English Proficiency Index (EPI) fact sheet for Venezuela in 2023, the country ranks low in English proficiency, with regional scores ranging from 451 to 524, placing Venezuela in the “Low Proficiency” category. This suggests that despite widespread English instruction, especially in secondary schools, the population struggles to achieve a functional command of the language.

There are many factors that have had an influence in the development of language competence in secondary students. Some of them are that many English teachers lack specialized training and report low self-efficacy, which affects instructional quality (Chacón, 2005).

The curriculum often emphasizes

grammar and translation over communicative competence, limiting students' ability to use the language in real-world contexts, besides of the limited time dedicated to it per week. Additionally, public schools face severe shortages of teaching materials, technological resources, and infrastructure, further hindering effective language acquisition (British Council, n.d.).

Students also have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, as it is not commonly spoken in daily life, and access to English-language media is restricted by economic conditions. But maybe, one of the most powerful reasons is the English teaching methodology used by teachers in secondary schools.

This was the motivation to start a nation-wide teacher training programme to get public secondary school teachers acquainted with updated English teaching methodologies that would help students learn the foreign language more efficiently.

During the inception of this programme, the world was experiencing the COVID-19 pandemics, schools were closed and strict quarantines were taking place which prevented any type of face-to-face encounters. For this reason, the training programme was designed and delivered online.

Another challenge was ahead, the limitations for the teachers to have access to computers/laptops and stable internet connections. After evaluating different options, the Telegram app resulted in a good alternative in the face of these conditions.

Telegram as a tool to conduct this teacher trainer programme had many advantages and a few disadvantages. Despite it being a new app for many participants and some of the trainers, after a short time they all showed competence in using the app for teaching and learning.

Among the advantages found by participants and trainers, there are::

Category	Advantage
Efficiency	Consumes less internet data than other applications
Multi-device use	Works on computers, laptops, tablets, and phones simultaneously
Storage	Files are saved in the Telegram cloud without using device space
File sharing	Allows transferring files with no size restrictions
Video calls	Unlimited participants, no time restrictions, free, can be recorded and shared
Cost	The application is free
Organization	Important messages and files can be pinned to the top of the chat
Log/Record	All types of interaction are recorded
Accessibility	Messages can be translated
Participation tools	Polls can be created easily
Expression	Participants use GIFs and emojis

Some of the disadvantages:

Category	Advantage
Interaction	There are no breakout rooms, so interaction was mainly trainers-participants. However, on some occasions multiple “mini-groups” were created for participants to do group work
Access to recordings	Live session recording files are too large so at times, participants with slow internet connections had difficulties downloading these files to watch the recording

However, there are more advantages than disadvantages of using this app, especially in the Venezuelan context.

The use of this app with all its benefits allowed the programme to be more inclusive and it opened the possibility to teachers in remote zones where internet access is limited or lack of gadgets might have prevented them from participating.

The programme consisted of 12 modules based on the British Council’s Continuous Professional Development Framework:

Module 1	ELT Approaches and Methods	**Module 7**	Integrating ICT
Module 2	Teaching Teenagers	**Module 8**	Promoting 21stCentury Skills
Module 3	Meaning Lessons	**Module 9**	Assesing Learning
Module 4	Meaning Resources	**Module 10**	Teacher Educator
Module 5	Inclusive Practices	**Module 11**	English for the Planet
Module 6	Lesson Planning	**Module 12**	Intercultural Competences

Each module consisted of 10 workshops. The pedagogy used a ‘flipped approach’. Each workshop consisted of a pre-workshop task (some asynchronous work students had to do in preparation for the live session) and a live session (synchronous) which lasted an hour. Each module had two assessments: the first one after workshop 4 that included content of workshops 1 to 4 and the second one after workshop 9 that included content from workshops 5 to 9.

The first module started in October 2021 and module 12 finished in March 2025.

The first module, ELT Approaches and Methods, started in October and ended in December 2021. In this module, participants studied different ELT methods and approaches that had been developed in contemporary history. Participants had

the chance to compare and contrast methods and approaches, evaluate advantages and disadvantages of each method and approach and reflect about their own teaching practice.

The Module started with an onboarding session. This session was addressed to all participants in order to give welcoming words, general instructions and guidelines for the work they would start in their different groups. This session was recorded and made available to all participants in the general group.

Between January and March 2022, participants took Module 2. This Module, "Teaching Teenagers", allowed participants to reflect about teenagers' characteristics and different strategies to use in the classroom.

This Module, similarly, to Module 1, started with an onboarding session in which all participants received instructions and general information about the Module.

Module 3 took place between May and July 2022. The Module, called "Managing the lesson", contained basic information and tips to have more efficient lessons. It included tips for establishing a positive classroom environment, how to deal with pace, timing and transitions, types of classroom layouts and when to use each, when to use of own language and English, tips to giving effective instructions, how to do elicitation and correction, tips to monitoring and reflection on lessons.

Module 4, Managing Resources, started in October 2022 and ended in December 2022. In this Module, participants discussed the different types of resources that could be used to teach every skill and language component. They also highlighted the importance of using resources to teach a language.

In January 2023, participants started Module 5, Inclusive Practices and finished by March 2023. In this Module, participants got acquainted with differentiation techniques they could use in the classroom. They also worked on recognising and valuing diversity among learners in relation to areas which include language background, cognitive ability, academic ability, physical ability, social background, behavioural differences, disability, age, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion and belief.

Module 6 took place between April 2023 and July 2023. This Module was about "Lesson Planning". In this Module, participants discussed the different stages of the lesson, the type of activities expected in each stage, classroom layout and interaction patterns, sequence and connection of lessons, designing learning aims and objectives, among other relevant topics related to lesson planning.

By October 2023, participants started Module 7, Integrating ICT. In this module, participants explored Information, Communication and Technology tools they could adapt or use with their students inside and outside the classroom. Module 7 ended in December 2023.

From January to March 2024, Module 8 “Promoting XXI century skills” took place. In this module, participants explored the XXI Century Skills as proposed by UNESCO. They explored different activities that they could integrate in their English lessons to promote the development of these skills. They also reflected on the importance of fostering the integral development of students.

In April 2024, Module 9 started, this related to Assessment. In this module, participants discussed principles of assessment, types of assessments, advantages and disadvantages of each type of assessment and they also designed assessment tasks that followed principles and were functional to their different contexts and needs. This module ended in July 2024.

Module 11 took place between October and December 2024. This Module was “English for the Planet”. In this module participants had the opportunity to raise their own awareness about the climate crisis and our collective and individual responsibilities to prevent more damage to the planet. They explored different activities that integrated raising awareness about the environment and the teaching of English as a foreign language.

The last Module, Development of Intercultural Competence started in January and ended in March 2025. This module helped participants get awareness of the importance of respecting and valuing cultural diversity, avoiding stereotypes and growing awareness about the otherness.

It was the first time for many of the teachers and trainers to use Telegram as an app for a teacher training experience. There was an initial research study on the potentialities of Telegram as a potential platform to be used for these purposes and, along the delivery of the programme, there were adjustments based on the experience.

5. 3 The Teachers (Cohort I)

For the implementation of this programme, UNEM made an open call in August and September 2021 to pre-service and in-service secondary school teachers. Most of the population who initially showed interest in enrolling in the programme were students, facilitators or tutors of the *Programa de Formación Avanzada* (PNF) in English that belong to *Universidad Nacional Experimental del Magisterio “Samuel Robinson”* (UNEM).

Despite the communication challenges posed by the pandemic, UNEM succeeded in gathering a diverse group of participants from all states across the country.

In Module 1, there were 13 training groups. Participants joined groups

according to the schedule rather than their region of residence, which meant that individuals from different parts of the country came together. This arrangement fostered a rich cultural exchange, not only with the international trainers but also among the participants themselves. The remaining modules were organised into 12 training groups with the same characteristics.

Throughout the training programme, 1583 certificates were issued. The average module completion was 71%, with Module 5 (Inclusive Practices) having the highest percentage of completion. See Figure 1.

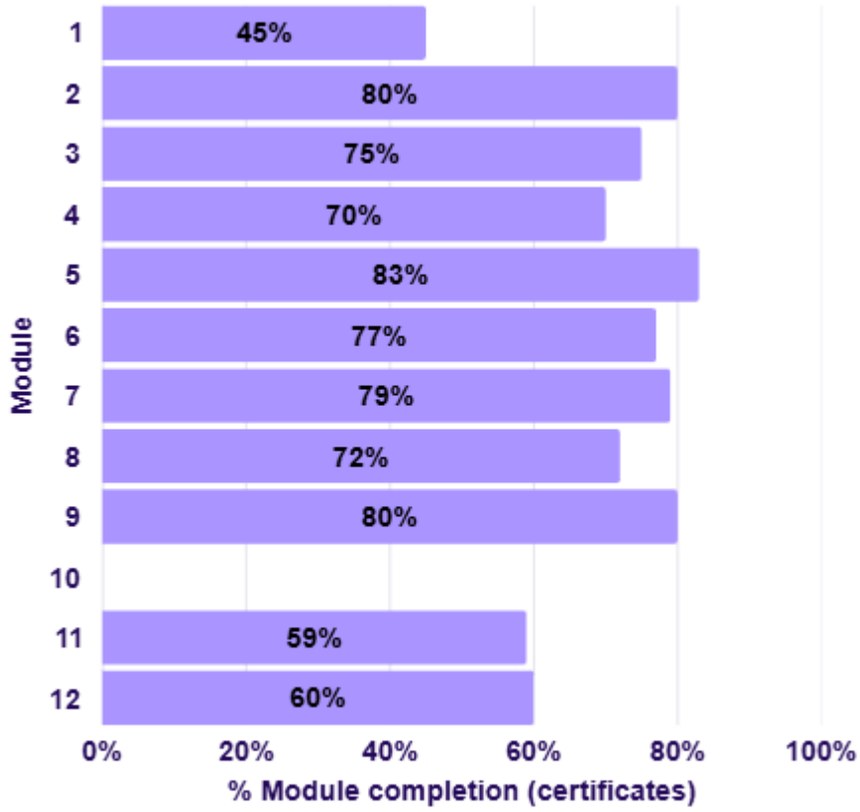


Figure 1: Percentage of Module Completion (certificates)

The number of participants varied especially in the first modules but then, cohort I consolidated in a block of about the same number of participants. As the programme was delivered, the number of participants was decreasing but it was a long training programme that lasted four years with the same participants, so dropouts were expected.

Participants were located in different states of the country. The states with higher participation along the 12 modules were: Distrito Capital, Sucre, Aragua, Miranda, Nueva Esparta and Zulia.

The proportion of women and men in the programme remained stable during the four years with an average of 74:26 respectively.

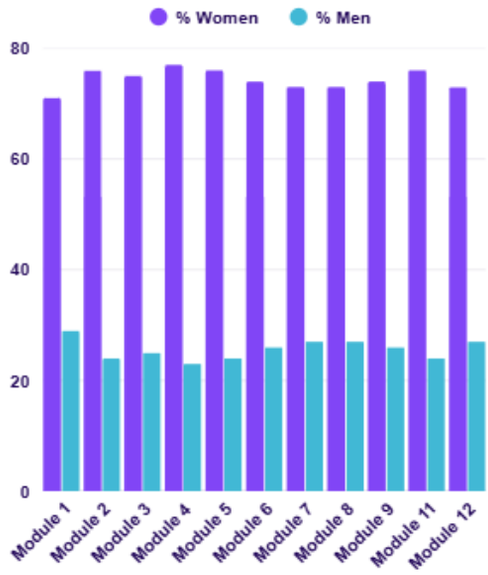


Figure 3: Percentage women and men per module

Regarding the age of participants, around 43% of participants were between 41 and 50 years old, 32% were between 51 to 60 years old, 16% were between 31 to 40 years, 7% more than 60 years, 2% between 26 and 30 years old and 1% between 18 and 25.

Throughout the programme the average of in-service teachers was 82% while 18% were students of the PNF (pre-service teachers).

Around 84% of participants lived in urban areas while 16% in rural areas.

Module 10

Module 10 is a different module to the others as its purpose was to train participants to become trainers.

Its first delivery took place in parallel to Module 2 (January - March 2022). A UK trainer from ELT Consultants worked with a group of around 30 local facilitators and tutors who worked at UNEM. Similarly to the other modules, this one was delivered completely online using a flipped approach with synchronous and asynchronous work.

The first sessions were about theoretical grounding on teacher training and the rest of the sessions provided a space for these participants to carry out micro-lessons online using the content of Module 1 to practice delivering the module with their peers.

Module 10 was delivered again by a UK trainer from ELT Consultants between April and July 2022, in parallel to Module 3. This time there was a group of around 50 facilitators and tutors from UNEM. They used the same methodology as in the previous term, characterised by co-teaching, reflection and peer-assessment.

Module 10 was then delivered by a group of UNEM facilitators and tutors who had taken Module 10 before. The participants this time were some UNEM students or teachers who were part of the group of participants from the first cohort who showed willingness and attributes to become trainers.

This module was of fundamental importance, as it later enabled the cascading of the programme and made possible the training of cohorts II, III, and IV. As a result, the number of participants who benefitted from the training programme grew exponentially.

5.4 The Trainers

There was a group of international trainers that ranged between 7 and 12 trainers each module. Some of these taught one, two, three, or all the modules. All the trainers had a wide experience in teaching training. These trainers had a basic knowledge of Spanish. Some of them had experience in working in challenging contexts.

Although these trainers had experience in remote teaching, at the beginning they did not have experience on training through Telegram. That is why before starting Module 1, trainers participated in onboarding sessions and joined a Telegram channel containing demo videos on how to use the Telegram features for teaching.

> Participants had very positive comments about the trainers in all the modules. The trainers also had positive comments about participants and the training programme highlighting participants' resilience and high motivation to persevere despite the multiple challenges given by the context.

According to trainers, the content of the training programme was accurate, updated, manageable and applicable. Based on trainers' suggestions, the materials were adapted and improved along the programme.

5.5 The Materials

For this training programme, the first product was a set of recordings to introduce participants and trainers on the functions of Telegram and the different aspects they needed to know for effectively participating in the course. These demo-recordings were uploaded in a Telegram channel of free-access. This was particularly useful at the beginning of Module 1.

After module 1, participants were widely familiarised with the basic tools of Telegram required for the programme.

The British Council along with the UK ELT Consultants and a team of multi-national writers designed the materials for each module based on the British Council's CPD framework taking into account the characteristics of the programme: completely online with synchronous and asynchronous tasks using a flipped approach and with the characteristics of the Telegram app.

For each module, there were ten workshops. For each workshop, this was the set of documents produced by the writers:

For Asynchronous work:

PT_Pre-workshop (PPT and PDF): This document had a fixed structure: preliminary slides, body and task.



The preliminary slides included the cover page identifying the module and workshop, a slide presenting the trainer and giving an encouraging greeting message, the aims of the workshop, and the assessment criteria for the module.

The body was used to present content in preparation for the workshops. It could

contain theoretical aspects, reflection questions, examples, introduction to the topic, summary, among others. In the body, they could also find short tasks to be answered in the participants' learner journal.

The task was located at the end of the document. It identified an activity participants had to do before the live session. It was clearly stated in the document that participants should share their answers in the Telegram chat before the live session. This task was given marks that varied depending on the module and the complexity of the task.



The pre-workshop task document was usually shared by trainers immediately after the live session and participants had exactly a week to read the document, do the task and share it in the Telegram group before the next live session.

There was another file for asynchronous work. It was called "Recovery task". This document was optional and it was only used by participants who were not able to attend the live session. If a participant missed a live session, he or she was asked to watch the recording of the session, to read the chat messages and to read the "recovery" document and submit a task before the next live session. The recovery document contained a set of questions based on the information shared during the live session. If a participant did the recovery task, he or she could recover the mark for attendance.

Section	Content
Attendance	If you were unable to attend the entire workshop:
Step 1	Watch the recording and read the workshop presentation.
Step 2	Choose the correct answer for each question below and send it through the chat, along with your name, before the next workshop.

True or False Decide if the following statements are true or false	
Letter	**Statement**
A	Having difficulty paying attention, even for short periods, is an academic problem.
B	Confusing words that sound the same is a cognitive problem.
C	Talking with classmates while the teacher is explaining something is a cognitive problem.
D	Having trouble forming words correctly is a cognitive problem.
E	Disliking a subject is an academic problem.

Synchronous Workshop materials:

PT_Facilitador_Modulo X Taller X: This was a Power Point presentation used by the trainer to deliver the live session. It had a fixed structure: preliminary slides, body and reflection.



For the preliminary slides, there was a cover page identifying the module and workshop number, a slide asking participants to mute their microphones, a slide showing a glossary of the symbols they would find in the slides and their meanings, a slide to require participants to answer a poll about the time they spent doing the pre-workshop task and activity, the session outcomes, the assessment criteria for the module and a slide to discuss pre-workshop task answers.

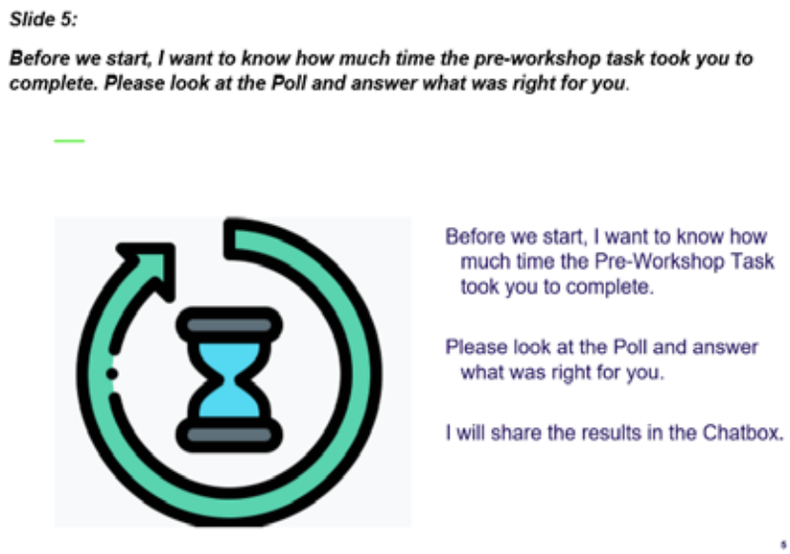
In the body, there were slides to discuss the topics with different tasks like: show a thumb up or a thumb down if you agree with this statement, show an emoji or gif to show how you feel about this statement, gap filling, open questions, matching, among others.

The reflection part was located at the end of the document. There was always an opportunity at the end of the live session to talk about what they liked, what and/or how to put into practice an idea discussed, what they have learned, what they think they need to go deeper, among other activities to reflect about the content of the session

FN_Module X_Workshop X of 10: This was the Facilitator's Notes document. This document had an introductory part with general ideas about the programme, the module, the aims, safeguarding, assessment criteria, types of tasks to be used and a detailed lesson plan that includes suggested scripted language for the trainer of what he/she can say while showing each slide.

Section	Content
Resources	Module prior to the PT (Pre-Workshop) workshop
Activity Configuration (Pre-Workshop)	1. This material must be shared with participants before the workshop, and they must be informed that there is a task they should bring to the workshop. 2. Share the PowerPoint presentation via Telegram, selecting the pre-workshop PowerPoint. 3. Remind participants, before starting Workshop 3, that there is an activity to complete and share, worth 1 point for their module evaluation.
Note	NOTE: Some teachers may not be able to access the PowerPoint, so please copy and paste screenshots into the chat.
References	A list of activities with instructions and tutorials, which have been reviewed and are usable with the participants of this teacher training, is available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1P7TUoCaYtWI-5pcHTJ5qyUd-e3JzXIND-H6XA-hn3PU/edit#heading=h.csgi6ilbr9sl
Workshop 3	Workshop 3 (60 minutes)
Slide	Facilitator Module
Activity Configuration (Workshop 3)	1. Before starting, ensure that your Telegram screen is split so that you can see the participants' chat and the PowerPoint at the same time.

Module X _chatbox screenshots_ Workshop X de 10: This document contained screenshots of each slide of the power point presentation used during the live session, accompanied by the scripted language to be used by the trainer in each slide. The purpose of this document is to provide a tool for trainers to make the live session more inclusive. Because of the deficient internet service in many areas of Venezuela, some participants were connected to the call but could not watch the shared screen. In this case, the trainer copied from this document the screenshots and pasted them in the chat making it possible for these participants with weak internet to have access to all the information that is being shared during the live session. Sometimes, participants expressed that because of internet problems, they could not hear the trainer properly. In this case, the trainer copied the scripted language from this document to the chat so these participants could still participate through the chat.



5.6 The Classroom Observations

As it was mentioned before, when this programme started, Venezuela, like other countries, had suspended face-to-face activities due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Due to multiple factors, classroom observation became a challenge. During the first modules, schools were closed because of Covid-19 pandemic. Schools resumed face-to-face classes gradually, school holidays started earlier, new school year started later than usual, and teachers' intermittent strikes and demonstrations affected the chances of visiting schools for classroom observations.

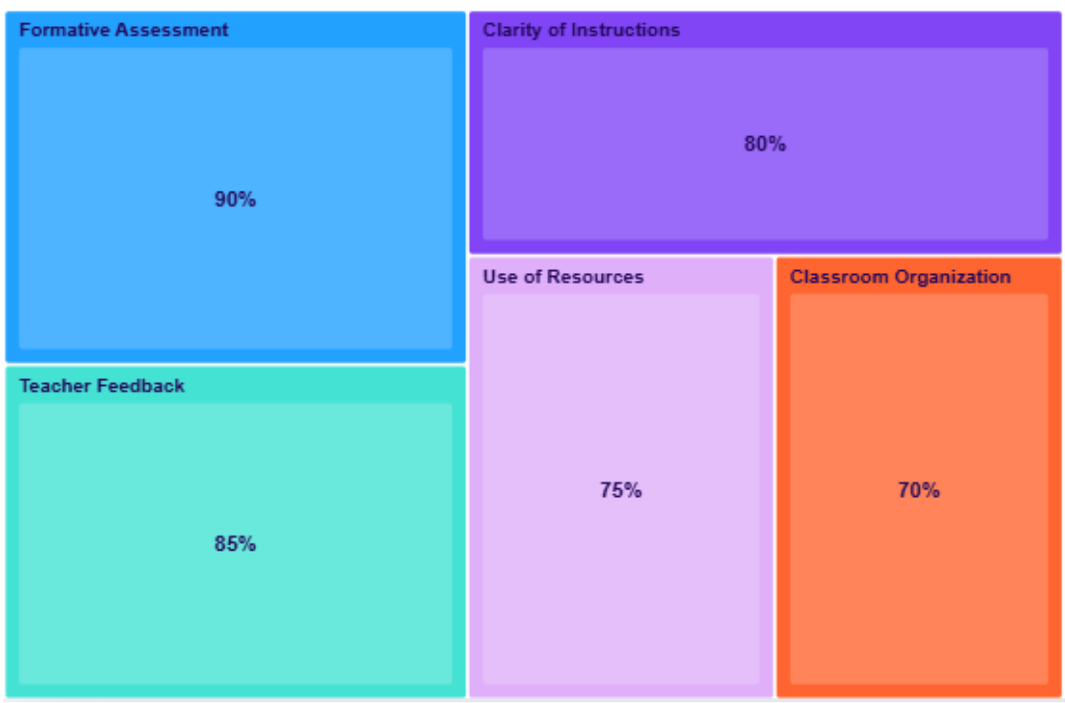
Despite all these factors, some participants were observed teaching English in their public secondary school classrooms during the training programme. The schools visited were located in nine different states of the country

like: Distrito Capital, La Guaira, Falcón, Mérida, Anzoátegui, Bolivar, Monagas, Sucre, Miranda, Lara.

It was about one year and a half after the programme had started that classroom observations could take place, i.e. participants who were observed were taking module 5 at the moment of the observations. The second round of observations took place when participants were taking Modules 7 and 8 (October 2023 - March 2024) and the last round of observations occurred when participants were taking the last module (January - March 2025).

During classroom observations, teachers showed that they were putting into practice in their classrooms what they had learned and discussed during the training. Common points of good practice observed included:

- The teachers used an appropriate balance of indirect and direct error correction techniques and provided positive and constructive feedback to support learning.
- The teachers observed used informal assessment techniques appropriately during the lessons.
- In all classes observed, the resources were used appropriately to support learning.
- Most of the teachers observed arranged the classroom in pairs or horseshoe. All of them except one had pair and/or group work in their classes.
- Teacher-talking time in all classes was moderate and adjusted to the needs of the classes.
- Teachers observed ensured there were different activity types adapting difficulty when necessary.
- All teachers observed varied their learning tasks giving opportunities to different learners with different learning preferences.
- Most of the teachers (4) gave clear and simple instructions, using examples and checking clarity of instructions. 3 teachers gave good instructions (short and simple, using examples)
- All teachers observed had good timing and transitions. Students were engaged at the different stages of the class.
- The teaching environment was excellent in all classes observed.
- All teachers made sure students were engaged in the class. Most students looked motivated and interested in the activities proposed by the teachers.



Some of the elements that needed more attention were:

There was an overuse of Spanish in the classes observed

Although instructions were clear and short, teachers did not check if students had understood the instructions.

In the visits to schools, principals or school authorities were interviewed. Their vision of the programme, as expressed in the interviews, was highly positive. They acknowledged changes in the classroom and in students' attitudes towards the subject.

Here some of their comments:

> *El docente antes trabajaba solo la parte escrita y ahora hace énfasis en la parte oral y en la práctica.*
>
> The teacher worked with the written part only and now he makes emphasis on the oral practice. **Principal interviewed in Module 5 in La Guaira on 24/01/2023.**

> *La profesora se muestra mucho más motivada y con ganas de implementar cosas nuevas en su clase.*
>
> The teacher shows herself much more motivated and interested in implementing new things in her class. **Principal interviewed in Module 5 in Distrito Capital 13/02/2023**

> *La profesora ahora mantiene el control de los estudiantes y se ve que los estudiantes están trabajando más.*
>
> The teacher keeps the control of the students and it is noticeable that students are working more). **Vice-principal interviewed in Bolívar in 15/02/2023**



5.7 Participants' Views of the Training Programme

After each module, participants were asked their impressions about each module and the training programme in general in post-module surveys.

Participants' outputs about the programme were highly positive after each module. On average (calculating responses from surveys after modules 1-9 and 11 and 12), over 91% assessed the modules as excellent and over 98% said excellent or very good. The evaluation of participants to all modules was consistent. Most participants said not only in the surveys but also in interviews that the training programme is excellent.

What they said they liked the most about the programme was:

- They were learning new things. (All post-module surveys)
- They were practicing English (specially the skill of listening). (Surveys after Modules 1, 2 and 3)
- They were learning things they could put into practice in their classroom. (All post-module surveys)
- They were learning how to use Telegram and were using it with their students. (Surveys after Modules 1 and 2)

- They liked how the trainers delivered the workshops. (All post-module surveys)
- They felt great sharing knowledge and opinions with other colleagues. (Surveys after Modules 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 11)

Key messages	
Key findings	LParticipants shared valuable feedback on their experiences, focusing on learning, collaboration, and practical application in the classroom, which fostered a positive learning environment.
Application in teaching practice	Participants valued the acquisition of new knowledge that can be directly applied to their teaching practice.
Skill development	Many participants enjoyed improving their English listening comprehension skills, showing significant progress during interactive sessions.
Trainer methodology	The trainers' dynamic and engaging teaching methods significantly improved the learning experience, making the workshops enjoyable and effective
Overall programme impact	The programme strengthened teaching competencies and promoted active, collaborative, and relevant learning experiences.

Here some of their comments:

> *Este módulo [3] ha sido espectacular, nos ha dado muchas formas para manejarnos mejor en las situaciones actuales de enseñanza.*
>
> This module [3] has been amazing, it has given us many tools to have a better performance in current teaching situations. **Source: Post-module 3 survey.**

> *[El módulo 4] Ha sido un excelente intercambio de conocimientos y nos ha hecho valorar los detalles de nuestra labor cotidiana. También nos ha enseñado excelentes tips para un mejor aprovechamiento del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje.*
>
> [Module 4] has been an excellent exchange of knowledge and it has made us value the details in our daily work. It has also taught us excellent tips to have better results of the teaching learning process. **Source: Post-module 4 survey.**

> *Agradecida por esta experiencia que me fortalece en mi desempeño como docente y me enriquece como ciudadana de un contexto digital mundial (global citizenship).*
>
> (I am grateful for this experience that strengths my performance as a teacher and it helps me as a citizen in a worldwide digital context). **Source: Post-module 2 survey.**

> *Excelente aun con la poca cobertura de internet en la zona donde vivo, he aprovechado mucho y aprendido, sobre todo me ha*

brindado seguridad en mi practica (sic) docente regular."

Excellent despite limitations of internet in the place where I live, I have taken advantage [of the course] and I have learned, above all it has given me confidence in my regular teaching practice. **Source: Post-module 7 survey**

"En verdad en cada módulo se superan en temas y presentación, aunado el valor agregado del entrenador que es maravilloso.

Each module you surpass yourselves in topics and presentation, combined with the added value of the trainer who is wonderful. **Source: Post-module 8 survey**.

La formación nos proyecta y ayuda a desenvolverse mejor en nuestro contexto.

The training projects us and helps us work better in our context. **Source: Post-module 8 survey.**

Los talleres de amplio crecimiento profesional, el pre importante prepararse para la lección a aprender, el post interesante medir cuanto aprendistes, logística súper organizado. Me siento afortunada de estar en el programa!.

The workshops provide extensive professional growth, the pre-workshops are important to be prepared for the lesson to be learned, the interesting post to measure how much you learned, the programme has super organized logistics. I feel lucky to be on this training! **Source: Post-module 8 survey**.

5.8 The Cascading (Cohorts II, III, and IV)

In January 2022, while regular participants took Module 2, a selected group of local tutors and facilitators from UNEM took Module 10 (Teacher educator module). The purpose of delivering module 10 at this early stage of the training programme was to prepare a group of local trainers who could cascade the training programme to more participants, guaranteeing continuity and sustainability of the programme.

In module 10, tutors and facilitators had the opportunity to rehearse delivering modules using Telegram with the support of a trainer. This practice let them foresee potential problems when delivering locally (power shortages, weak or unstable connection, lack of gadgets, among others) and find possible solutions to these problems.

For the cascading in October 2022, while participants of the 1st cohort were taking module 4, the trainers and facilitators who took Module 10 started the cascading with the second cohort of the training programme with Module 1.

There was a reiteration of Module 10 between April and July 2022, and in January 2023 a third cohort started.

By April 2023, tutors and facilitators who had taken Module 10 with a UK trainer, started cascading the training with local facilitators and by October 2023, the fourth cohort started Module 1. All these cohorts train participants with similar characteristics: UNEM students, facilitators or tutors, pre- or in-service secondary school English teachers from all over the country. They kept the mentoring of the UK trainer.

By November 2024, the UK trainer delivered Module 10 in a blended format with some sessions online and an intensive, face-to-face training week. Participants of this training were a mixture of UNEM facilitators and tutors with PNF teachers and students.

5.9 Limitations

All the 12 modules, participants continuously expressed that the main obstacles they found were internet and electricity problems. Most states of the country present constant blackouts, some of them have electricity rationing schedules which caused difficulties for participants to join live sessions.

The other big issue was internet connection failure. The speed of the internet in Venezuela has been characterised for being slow and unstable, specially from mobile data which is what participants used the most. This caused interruptions of communications during the live sessions, inability to see the shared screen or hear properly what the trainer or other participants were saying.

Because of these problems, some actions were taken to minimise the impact of these limitations in the development of the programme. In the case of electricity shortages that impeded participants to attend the live session, they were given the option to "recover" the live session attendance by watching the recording of the session and answering a set of questions about it (recovery task). Participants were able to opt for a recovery task three times per module to recover the attendance of their missing workshops.

In the case of problems with connectivity, trainers shared in the chat screenshots of the material presented through screen share mode. If connectivity affected audio, trainers had scripted most of the language they would use during the session in a document they could cut and paste in the chat so participants could follow the session, if not by listening at least by reading the messages in the chat.

6. Case Studies

To gain deeper insight into the project from the participants' perspective, four teachers located in different regions of the country were selected to explore their experiences and reflections on the initiative.

The research gathered information using multiple methods, including surveys, interviews, and classroom observations of the three participants.

The identities of participants have been concealed in order to respect their privacy.

6.1 Participant 1

6.1.1 Profile

This is an English teacher who was born in San Cristóbal, Táchira state but currently lives and works in Caracas, the capital city. She teaches English in a technical secondary school in Caricuao. She is 56 years old and has been an English teacher for the last 6 years.

6.1.2 Academic Background:

In 1992, she graduated with a high school diploma in Science and a technical qualification in Tourism. Years later, in 1998, she began working as a Contact Lens Assistant, marking the start of a 33-year career in the optical field. She worked for prestigious companies such as Óptica Berl and Óptica Caroní, where she steadily advanced and consolidated her experience in various roles of coordinator. She affirms that "These roles instilled in me discipline, leadership, and a deep sense of commitment, helping me understand that work, when embraced with passion, can become a truly enriching adventure rather than just an obligation." (Participant 1, 2025) [9]

In 2016, she along with her family joined the Scout Association of Venezuela. This was a life-changing step that she considers a great school of life. As she says: "Its principles and Law have guided the way I live, and through this movement, I reaffirmed the importance of educating by example—through action and social commitment." (Participant 1., 2025)[10]

In 2019, she enrolled in the National Training Programme in Secondary Education in Foreign Languages, specialising in English, and simultaneously began working as an active classroom teacher.

In 2025, she graduated with a degree in Secondary Education in Foreign Languages, specialising in English at UNEM.

6.1.3 Teaching Experience:

In 2019, she started working as an English teacher while she started studying at the PNF. In 2021, she started working at Escuela Técnica Francisco Fajardo where she has found extraordinary and supportive colleagues and students full of hope. She has worked at this school since then and she describes it as a "space [that] became a human laboratory, where every class was both a challenge and an opportunity to grow alongside my students. I learned that teaching is not about being the centre of attention, but about being a bridge that helps others discover their own potential." (Participant 1, 2025)[11]

6.1.4 In the Training Programme

She got to know about the training programme through her UNEM teacher who invited her to participate.

Prior to joining the training programme, the teacher relied on traditional methods such as dictation and board work, with occasional activities developed independently and without formal guidance. The pandemic exacerbated her lack of classroom experience, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of her teaching. She faced challenges due to limited access to physical materials—especially textbooks—and lacked methodological tools to engage students as active participants in their learning.

Identified Training Needs She recognized the need to improve classroom management, activity planning, and the use of innovative teaching methodologies. Her goal was

[9] *"These roles gave me the discipline, leadership and the commitment to understand that work, rather than an obligation, can be an enriching adventure when undertaken with passion"* (Participant 1. 2025)

[10] *"Its principles and its Law have guided my way of living, and thanks to this movement I confirmed the importance of educating by example, through action and social commitment"* (Participant 1, 2015)

[11] *"That space became a human laboratory, in which every class was a challenge and an opportunity to grow alongside my students. I learned that teaching is not about taking centre stage, but about being a bridge so that others can discover their own potential"* (Participant 1, 2015)

to enhance student engagement and structure her lessons more effectively.

Participation in the Programme She joined the programme thanks to an invitation from her professor. The training focused on effective methodologies for teaching English, emphasising student-cantered learning and global citizenship. She found the content highly relevant, particularly lessons on classroom organization, innovative planning, and didactic strategies. The programme validated her previous efforts and helped refine her teaching approach. Online sessions provided consistent support, with facilitators offering guidance both during and outside scheduled classes.

Changes in Teaching Practice She immediately began applying what she learned. She reorganized her classroom layout, improved board presentation, and designed more engaging lesson plans. She encouraged student participation and tailored her planning to individual learning needs. Initially, students resisted the unfamiliar methods, but over time, their involvement grew. They became more active, motivated, and invested in their learning, with classroom notebooks becoming valuable tools in their academic progress.

Sharing Knowledge with Colleagues She collaborated with teachers from other subject areas, some of whom embraced the new strategies. However, many were reluctant to adopt changes due to rigid planning structures, resistance to innovation, workload concerns, and low compensation.

Professional Outlook She envisions herself as a multiplier of the programme's impact, advocating for broader access to the tools and knowledge she gained. She remains committed to ongoing learning, critical reflection, and innovation, recognizing that the true value of her work lies in empowering Venezuela's children and youth—the country's most precious treasure.

> *"Participating in the programme was a major personal and professional challenge. Surrounded by highly skilled peers, she overcame self-doubt and embraced the opportunity to grow. She valued the programme's humanistic approach, inclusive methodology, and the use of Telegram as a communication tool. She suggested future workshops focused on regional needs and recommended expanding the initiative to other disciplines*

6.2 Participant 2

6.2.1 Profile

This is a female teacher who lives and works in Guanare, Portuguesa state. She teaches English at UEN Carlos Emilio Muñoz Oráa secondary school and has worked there for nine years. She is 32 years old and has been an English teacher for the last 11 years.

6.2.2 Academic Background:

Although she was born in Guanare, Portuguesa state, when she was a child, she moved to Ciudad Ojeda, Zulia. She was selected to study veterinary medicine at LUZ in Maracaibo, but due to financial and family reasons, she could not attend. Instead, she pursued a degree in Education at a local university centre affiliated with Misión Sucre. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Education in 2014.

As she wanted to become an English teacher, she got registered in a specialisation programme. Shortly after, she was invited to join the Micromisión Simón Rodríguez. As part of that registration, participants were granted permanent positions in the Ministry of Education, with a 36-hour teaching credential and immediate salary.

6.2.3 Teaching Experience:

In 2014, she began working as a substitute teacher at UEN Luis Caballero Mejías, a secondary school that no longer exists due to land subsidence caused by oil extraction. There, she taught English as a substitute and coordinated the CRA (Learning Resource Centre), often covering any subject needed when other teachers were absent.

The school was located in a high-crime area with widespread drug use, and many students exhibited challenging behaviours. Despite these difficulties, she remained at the school from 2014 to 2016. She learned a great deal about working in secondary education, but due to the worsening economic crisis, she decided to move back to Guanare, where the cost of living was more manageable, and she had family there.

Once she got registered in the specialization programme, she was assigned to UEN Carlos Emilio Muñoz Oráa, where she has worked for nearly eight years. She has also worked at a language academy.

6.2.4 In the Training Programme:

During the pandemic, she was a student at Micromisión Simón Rodriguez while they continued their lessons online using WhatsApp groups. Her facilitator often shared links to videoconferences and British Council pedagogical events. One day, she announced that a new course was mandatory for all students in their field. It started in June 2020. In her words “it turned out to be the most enriching academic experience I have ever had. I learned far more through this programme than in the rest of her university education.”

The classes were clear and engaging. Discussions with colleagues from across the country—many with long teaching careers—were incredibly insightful. The trainers offered fresh perspectives that challenged our everyday assumptions. The atmosphere was warm and respectful, and she felt truly supported.

In her own words: “In every session, it felt like a blindfold was being lifted from my eyes, I realised how much I still had to learn about what it truly means to teach. If I could change one thing for future cohorts, it would be to extend the class duration to two hours, as many topics deserve deeper exploration.”

Finally, in August 2023, she graduated with a degree in Secondary Education, specializing in English at UNEM.

Currently, she is back in Zulia where she teaches at El Insigne Simón Bolívar Educational Complex in Punta Gorda, Zulia, teaching English. She also teaches English to children and teenagers from home and runs a small business.

Initial Situation and Teaching Challenges Before joining the training programme, her English classes were primarily based on the grammar-translation method, which she estimated made up about 80% of her instruction. She faced several challenges: lack of confidence in herself, absence of colleagues in her subject area to exchange ideas with limited resources to create teaching materials, and difficulty developing all four language skills. Additionally, she struggled with disengaged parents and students who viewed English as irrelevant to their future, attending class out of obligation rather than interest, especially neglecting speaking and listening skills.

Identified Training Needs She realised she needed to make her classes more meaningful and engaging. Her students were not motivated, and she wanted to change that by introducing methods that would help them see English as a valuable and enjoyable subject. She sought strategies to foster active participation and develop communicative skills.

Participation in the Programme She learned about the programme through her UNEM facilitator, who informed students that participation was mandatory. Despite the initial obligation, she embraced the opportunity. While there were no in-person visits to her classroom, the facilitators were consistently available via Telegram to answer questions and provide support. She found all the content valuable, especially because the training offered a fresh perspective—even on traditional topics—thanks to the diversity of educators and their shared experiences. She particularly appreciated the focus on 21st-century skills and suggested these areas be expanded in future sessions.

Changes in Teaching Practice The training helped her shift her priorities. She began to treat student motivation as equally important as academic objectives. Her goal became to help students fall in love with learning English by presenting it in ways that matched their talents, interests, and learning styles. She avoided repetitive lessons, constantly experimenting with new strategies and encouraging students to grow at their own pace. The response was overwhelmingly positive students now felt free to express themselves creatively, saw their lives reflected in classroom activities, and felt heard and valued. Their participation increased, and she observed clear improvements in both motivation and learning outcomes.

Sharing Knowledge with Colleagues She now works alongside colleagues who are open to exchanging ideas, resources, and teaching strategies. This collaborative environment has enriched her practice and fostered a culture of shared growth.

Participating in the programme was a deeply enriching experience. She described it as a journey of personal and professional growth. Every session offered insights, even on seemingly basic topics like board usage, classroom layout, and having a clear pedagogical purpose for each activity. She expressed interest in repeating the experience and recommended future initiatives include longer sessions and a virtual platform with access to supplementary materials such as videos, articles, e-books, and downloadable resources before and after each session.

Professional Outlook She feels transformed. She now sees herself as an innovative and research-driven educator. The programme opened her mind to new possibilities and strengthened her commitment to continuous improvement. She remains dedicated to creating meaningful learning experiences and contributing to educational change in her community.

6.3 Participant 3:

6.3.1 Profile:

This is a male English teacher from Ciudad Bolívar, Bolívar state. He moved to Sucre state where he currently teaches in a secondary school located in a semi-rural area. He is 45 years old and has been teaching English for 10 years.

6.3.2 Academic Background:

He graduated from secondary school in 1997. Because of financial constraints, he had to start working in different areas not related to teaching. In 2012, he enrolled in a teacher training programme offered by the Micromisión Simón Rodríguez, which led to his formal entry into the teaching profession. In 2024, he graduated from UNEM with a degree in Secondary Education, specializing in English.

6.3.3 Teaching Experience:

He began teaching English in 2013 when he was appointed by the Micromisión to one of the local secondary schools. There, he was gaining experience and in 2017, he started working with "grupos estables" in his school where students who enrolled could practice English.

6.3.4 In the Training Programme:

He learned about the training programme through a facilitator of UNEM

Identified Training Needs He felt the need to improve his lesson planning, integrate technology into his teaching, and develop strategies for inclusive education, especially for students with learning difficulties.

Participation in the Programme He joined the programme in 2021 and found it transformative. The sessions on inclusive methodologies and digital tools were particularly impactful. He appreciated the facilitators' patience and the collaborative spirit among participants.

Changes in Teaching Practice He began using visual aids to engage students with limited access to textbooks. His lessons became more dynamic, and students responded with increased enthusiasm and participation.

He saw the programme as a turning point in his career. He valued the emphasis on humanistic education and the practical tools provided. He suggested future cohorts include more modules on classroom management, especially for teachers working in difficult environments.

6.4 Participant 4

6.4.1 Profile:

This is a female teacher, 38 years old, who lives and works in Maturin, Monagas State. She has been teaching English for 7 years.

6.4.2 Academic Background:

She studied Education at Simon Rodriguez university and graduated in 2009. After working in the private sector for several years, she decided to pursue her passion for English teaching and enrolled in the PNF in 2021. She graduated from UNEM in 2024.

6.4.3 Teaching Experience:

She worked in two private schools, teaching primary and as a substitute teacher in secondary school. She held administrative roles like Assessment Coordinator and Discipline coordinator. This kept her a bit distant from the actual teaching in the classrooms. When she started studying at Micromisión Simón Rodríguez, she was sent to a public school where she started teaching English full time. She has taught there for the last four years.

6.4.4 In the Training Programme:

She wanted to learn more about innovative teaching strategies, classroom management, and how to integrate technology into her lessons. She found out about the project through her PNF facilitator and encouraged her to join. What she found more interesting was the emphasis on student-centred learning and the use of real-life contexts to teach English. She felt there was always support not only from the trainer but also the other participants, who shared their experiences and helped her feel part of a learning community.

Changes in Teaching Practice: She felt that after the training, she completely changed her teaching practice as she used to focus solely on grammar. She could design engaging and inclusive lesson plans. She began using role-play, collaborative projects, and visual aids to make her classes more dynamic. Her students said they felt more engaged in their classes and appreciated the different activities.

For her, the project meant a valuable opportunity for professional growth and personal transformation. She described it as "a turning point that helped me rediscover the joy of teaching. " She now mentors other teachers at her school and advocates for ongoing professional development. She suggested future programmes include more hands-on workshops and follow-up sessions to continue building on the progress made.[12]

6.5 The Voice of Students

Although students were not formally interviewed or surveyed as part of this initiative, informal conversations between observers and learners in public secondary schools provided valuable insights into their experiences and perceptions. These spontaneous exchanges, often occurring during classroom visits or breaks, revealed a range of reactions to the changes implemented by participating teachers.

Many students expressed appreciation for the shift toward more interactive and engaging lessons. They noticed a difference in how English was being taught, less focused on rote memorization and more on activities that encouraged speaking, listening, and collaboration. One student commented, "Now we get to talk more in class, not just copy from the board. It feels like we're actually learning English."[13]

Others highlighted the impact of personalised attention and inclusive

[12] *"A world of difference that helped me to rediscover the thrill of teaching"* (Participante 4)

strategies. In classrooms where teachers applied differentiated planning and student-centred methodologies, learners felt more seen and heard. A student in Lara shared, “Before, I didn’t understand much, but now the teacher explains in different ways and gives us time to practice.”[14]

Students also responded positively to the use of visual aids, games, and real-life scenarios. These elements made lessons more relatable and helped bridge the gap between academic content and everyday life. In some cases, students began to view English not just as a school subject but as a moment of enjoyment.

While not all students adapted immediately to the new approaches, many acknowledged the effort their teachers were making to improve the classroom experience. Their informal feedback underscored the importance of motivation, relevance, and emotional connection in the learning process.

These voices, though anecdotal, affirm the transformative potential of the training programme, not only for educators but for the students whose lives are directly impacted by more thoughtful, inclusive, and dynamic teaching practices.



[13] *“Now we talk more in class, not just pure copying off the blackboard. It feels like we are actually learning English”*

[14] *“Before I didn’t understand much, but now the teacher explains things several times and gives us time to practise.”*

7. Lessons Learned

Over the course of this ten-year journey, countless lessons have emerged—each contributing to the continuous improvement and evolution of the training programmes. These insights reflect not only the challenges faced but also the innovation, commitment, and collaboration that defined the initiative.

One of the most significant takeaways has been the undeniable value of strategic partnership. The collaboration between the British Council and the Ministry of Education has strengthened institutional ties and delivered tangible benefits to Venezuela's education sector. By combining international expertise with local knowledge and infrastructure, both organisations successfully designed and implemented training programmes tailored to the realities of public-school teachers across the country. These joint efforts have advanced the professionalisation of English teaching, fostered innovative methodologies, and cultivated sustainable learning communities, ultimately enhancing educational quality and expanding opportunities for thousands of students.

Equally important has been the lesson of adaptation. The programmes demanded continuous flexibility and responsiveness to shifting conditions. Despite economic instability, resource limitations, and logistical barriers, both initiatives moved forward demonstrating that adaptability is not only necessary but transformative in complex educational contexts.

Another key insight is the power of local capacity building. Training facilitators within Venezuela who could cascade knowledge regionally ensured both sustainability and contextual relevance. These facilitators played an important role, not only in delivering content but also in motivating peers to engage with the programmes. Their leadership fostered a sense of ownership and continuity, reinforcing the long-term impact of the training.

Resilience among educators emerged as one of the programme's most remarkable strengths. Despite facing economic hardship, migration pressures, and daily challenges, many teachers remained deeply committed to their

professional growth. Their perseverance was consistently praised by international trainers, who noted their motivation and engagement even under difficult circumstances.

This resilience translated into meaningful classroom transformation. Observations confirmed that teachers were applying new methodologies, creating more inclusive and student-centred learning environments. Students were visibly more engaged, and teaching practices reflected a clear shift toward active learning.

Finally, the programme's emphasis on continuous feedback proved essential. Participant evaluations consistently reflected high levels of satisfaction, with teachers valuing the opportunity to practice English and acquire new teaching strategies. This ongoing dialogue between trainers and participants helped refine the programme and ensured its relevance to the evolving needs of educators across the country.

8. Recommendations for Future Training

Building on the lessons learned over the course of this ten-year journey, several key recommendations emerge to guide the design and implementation of future training programmes for English teachers in Venezuela

8.1 Strengthen Strategic Partnerships

One of the most valuable insights from the programme has been the transformative potential of collaborative approaches. The partnership between the Ministry of Education and the British Council has contributed positively to the development and implementation of national English-teaching policies and strategies. Strengthening this cooperation within existing policy frameworks could facilitate broader dissemination through official channels and reinforce the programme's long-term relevance and impact.

To expand its impact, future training programmes should actively involve other teacher-training universities across the country, creating a network of academic institutions committed to professional development in English language teaching. Additionally, partnerships with the private sector, such as educational publishers, technology providers, and language academies, could offer complementary resources, innovation, and funding opportunities. These multi-sector alliances would help scale the programmes nationally, diversify their delivery formats, and enrich their content with global best practices tailored to local realities.

8.2 Prioritise Adaptability

Given the unstable logistical and economic conditions in Venezuela, future training must remain flexible and responsive. Programmes should be designed with contingency plans and modular content that can be delivered across various formats, online, blended, or in-person—depending on context.

8.3 Invest in Local Capacity Building

Training and empowering facilitators within Venezuela is critical. These individuals not only deliver content but also serve as mentors, motivators, and change agents within their communities. Future cohorts should include structured facilitator development tracks and regional leadership support.

8.4 Support Teacher Resilience

Teachers have demonstrated extraordinary commitment despite adversity. Future programmes should include components that address emotional well-being, professional identity, and peer support networks. Recognising and reinforcing teacher resilience is key to long-term impact.

8.5 Focus on Classroom Transformation

Training should continue to emphasize student-centred methodologies, inclusive practices, and active learning. Future training programmes could expand on differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and the integration of digital tools to enhance engagement and learning outcomes.

8.6 Establish Systematic Follow-Up Mechanisms

To ensure long-term impact and continuous improvement, future training programmes should include structured follow-up strategies. While initial training provides essential tools and inspiration, sustained support is necessary to reinforce new practices, address emerging challenges, and adapt to evolving classroom realities.

This follow-up could take the form of periodic classroom visits, peer mentoring, regional reflection sessions, or digital platforms for ongoing dialogue. By institutionalising follow-up processes, it is more likely that the training is not a one-time event but part of a continuous professional development journey, ultimately leading to deeper pedagogical transformation and more consistent student outcomes.

8.7 Expand Training to Pre-Primary and Lower Primary Levels

To ensure a strong foundation in English language learning, future programmes should include dedicated training for teachers working at the pre-primary and lower primary levels. Early exposure to English, when supported by age-appropriate methodologies, can foster curiosity, confidence, and long-term language acquisition.

Currently, most training initiatives focus on secondary education, leaving a gap in pedagogical support for educators teaching younger learners. A specialized programme for early childhood and primary teachers would address this need by offering strategies in play-based learning, phonological awareness, storytelling, and classroom language

immersion. It would also help generalist teachers integrate English naturally into daily routines, even in multilingual or resource-limited settings.

By investing in early-stage teacher development, continuity in language learning can be promoted and students can be better prepared for future academic success.

By integrating these recommendations, future training programmes can build on the foundation already established, deepening impact, expanding reach, and continuing to transform English language education across Venezuela.

9. Conclusions

The decade-long collaboration between the British Council and the Ministry of Education has laid a strong foundation for the advancement of English language education in Venezuela. By addressing both primary and secondary sectors, and by designing programmes that respond to local realities, this partnership has empowered thousands of educators to transform their teaching practices.

While challenges such as economic instability and infrastructure limitations persist, the success of these initiatives demonstrates that strategic, inclusive, and adaptive training can yield meaningful and lasting change. The commitment of teachers, facilitators, and institutional partners has been the driving force behind this progress.

Looking ahead, continued investment in teacher development, digital innovation, and local leadership will be key to sustaining and expanding the impact of English language education across the country. Strengthening regional networks of educators, promoting peer-to-peer learning, and integrating technology into classrooms can help bridge gaps in access and quality. Moreover, fostering collaboration with universities, NGOs, and international partners will be essential to diversify resources and ensure long-term sustainability.

To truly embed English language education as a pillar of national development, it is vital to align these efforts with broader educational reforms and policy frameworks. This includes advocating for curriculum updates, supporting bilingual education models, and ensuring that English teaching is inclusive of rural communities. By doing so, Venezuela can cultivate a generation of learners equipped with the linguistic tools to engage globally, while remaining rooted in their local identities.

Ultimately, the journey of English language education in Venezuela is not just about language acquisition, it is about empowerment, opportunity, and resilience. The progress made thus far is a testament to what can be achieved through shared vision, strategic partnerships, and unwavering dedication. With continued support and innovation, the next decade holds promise for even greater transformation.

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Director of Wendy Arnold & Co. Ltd, a consultancy operating as ELT Consultants (United Kingdom). She has over 30 years of experience in English language teaching, including 15 years working in primary education classrooms with learners aged 5 to 12 in a state school in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Her consultancy work has encompassed curriculum reform in primary and secondary education, professional training, as well as project management for the writing and editing of language and methodology courses in East Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, South Asia, and Wider Europe.

She is a published author of English language teaching materials and has provided technical assistance to national teams in the design and implementation of educational projects related to English as both a subject and a medium of instruction. Her work has focused on national capacity building and the professional development of English language teachers.

Juana Sagaray

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Teacher and researcher with over 30 years of experience in the Venezuelan education sector, Juana Sagaray holds a Doctorate in Education and a Master's degree in Literature, specialising in English language teaching and teacher education. She has designed educational programmes and coordinated monitoring and evaluation processes for projects aimed at strengthening the quality of English language teaching.

Retired from the Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador, where she contributed to the training of education professionals, she also served as Project Manager at the British Council. She is currently Coordinator of English Courses for Children and Young Learners at the British Council, promoting innovative pedagogical approaches to early language learning.

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English teacher and researcher with extensive experience in the educational field, María Fernández holds a Doctorate in Education and a Master's degree in the Teaching of English Literature, specialising in language teaching and teacher education. She has developed instructional materials and participated in monitoring and evaluation processes for educational projects for the British Council.

For 17 years she worked at the Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador, where she contributed to the training of future education professionals. She currently works as a teacher and consultant for the British Council, promoting English language teaching through innovative pedagogical approaches and the development of communicative competences.

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