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Technical Report

Implementation of Top Notch with MyEnglishLab (MEL) and perceptions of impact on student outcomes: Examining two institutions in Peru

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Introduction

In this section, we provide a brief background to the initiative behind this study and a description of Top Notch and its components, before outlining the study's research questions, its sampling and the methods used to collect and analyze data.

Background

This report is part of Pearson's commitment to efficacy, launched in 2013. In the drive to improve student outcomes, we committed to reporting publicly on the impact of our products on student outcomes. Part of this commitment was, by 2018, to publish research that has been audited by a third party; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC).

In 2017, the Global Impact Evaluation team, part of the Global Efficacy and Research team at Pearson, designed and embarked on a series of studies on Top Notch and its counterpart, Speakout, both of which are used by tertiary institutions and private language schools (PLSs) worldwide. The studies aimed to examine the implementation, perceived impact and relationship between each product and its intended student outcomes, across different countries and multiple sites.

Description of Top Notch with MyEnglishLab

Top Notch is an English Language course for adults (in American English). It is used in Private Language Schools (PLSs), universities, and other tertiary institutions across the world. It is now in its third edition (2015), although the second edition (2012) is still in use in some countries. This six-level course includes: 1. Top Notch Fundamentals (Starter); 2. Top Notch Level 1 (Elementary); 3. Top Notch Level 2 (Pre-intermediate); 4. Top Notch Level 3 (Intermediate); 5. Summit Level 1 (Upper Intermediate), and 6. Summit Level 2 (Advanced).

The course components are:

- **Student's Book** – 90 to 120 hours of learning material available in split or full editions (the split editions come with a split workbook or a split MEL access code)
- **Classroom audio CDs** – audio materials to use in class
- **Workbook** – additional exercises to consolidate learning (in print)
- **MyEnglishLab** (student and teacher versions) – a platform with an array of exercises to consolidate learning. It includes meaningful feedback on wrong answers, remedial grammar exercises, grammar and pronunciation coaching videos, and auto-graded achievement tests
- **Teachers' edition** – detailed interleaved lesson plans, language culture notes, answer keys and more
- **ActiveTeach** – a CD-ROM for front-of-class use, which includes a digital version of the Student's Book, digital grammar exercises, videos, photocopiable activities for every unit, plus unit, mid-course and end-of-course tests
- **Audio and extra activities on English.com** – online grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening practice activities, plus downloadable classroom audio files
- **Full-course placement tests** – printable or online versions

The inclusion of MEL as an optional part of the Top Notch package allows institutions to adopt a blended learning approach to instruction. MEL is designed to support blended instruction by:

- providing students with the opportunity to work whenever they want, using the resources most likely to enhance their learning of course material
- helping students develop the skills to become responsible and autonomous students
- allowing students work at their own pace and to track their progress

MEL content can be assigned for the whole class, groups or individuals (Vymetalkova, 2016; Vasbieva and Klimova, 2015; Pearson, 2014a; 2014b). The use of MEL allows for the blending of classroom



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learning with synchronous and/or asynchronous outside-the-class learning. It has the potential to build a bridge, whereby teaching and technology support learning and inform each other.

Overall, Top Notch aims to support students to:

- engage with the materials and have a positive learning experience
- develop positive learning behaviors when using the materials
- progress in learning English
- be ready for the next stage of their learning in English
- achieve their goal(s)

The present study

The present study is an exploratory study which set out to answer the following questions:

- What are students' attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL when compared to other instructional experiences?
- What are teachers' attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL and of its use?
- How are courses implemented when using Top Notch with MEL and why do institutions engage with it in the first place?
- Why and how do students and teachers use MEL?
- What can we learn about teaching and learning from the MEL data?
- What is the perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on students, teachers and institutions?

The present study is not an evaluation of practice. Pearson aims to keep Top Notch flexible so that teachers are able to make their own choices on how to implement it. The flexibility in implementation coupled with the use of Top Notch with MEL being less widespread across countries and institutions, made it imperative, as a first step, to explore institutions' approach to implementing Top Notch with MEL, and teachers' and students' experiences and perceived impact when using the materials.

Implementation studies have the potential to improve learner outcomes by allowing us to know what works where, when and why. They are key to informing teaching and learning by providing evidence on which products and services are likely to 'work' within a particular context, institution, and classroom. Implementation research is rooted in capturing the real-life experiences and insights of students and teachers to develop an evidence-informed understanding of the factors that can enable or impede intended and unintended outcomes. Variability across settings, cultures, institutional preferences or priorities, professional development, and infrastructure can all affect the implementation of, and outcomes associated with, products and services.

The present study examines the implementation of Top Notch in two Peruvian institutions: Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano (ICPNA) de Chiclayo and ICPNA Cusco.

The structure of the report

To support ease of navigation and readability we have structured the report so that in the next section we outline the methods used in this study, including details on the data collection and analyses, before moving directly to the discussion of the findings. Prior to presenting the appendices, which include the study's full results, we provide the recommendations, the limitations and the references included in this study.

Sample

Given resources and timelines, a maximum of three institutions were sampled for this study. Stratified sampling was used to account for potential variation in practice. To derive a potential sample, a number of criteria were developed, as seen in Table 1. In hierarchical order, the non-negotiable criteria for selection were that institutions:

- used the most up-to-date version of Top Notch
- used the full Top Notch package (Student's Book, MEL and ActiveTeach)
- at least two of the institutions were using the full package for more than one year

To ensure triangulation of the data collected for the sampling, and to make sure that the data was accurate and current, four approaches were used:

1. Using the non-negotiable criteria, targeted searches were conducted of the sales databases that hold institutions' information related to Top Notch.
2. Searches identified institutions using the MEL platform. This information was corroborated with the sales data to point us to institutions with higher student activity using MEL.
3. Direct conversations were held between our Peru efficacy lead and sales representatives, who have an in-depth and up-to-date knowledge of institutional practices and issues.
4. Institutions were identified by the Peru efficacy lead, who also has in-depth knowledge of the institutions through research and the marketing activities that she leads.

The collected information was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet for each institution and for each of the criteria. Four institutions used Top Notch at the time of the research, of which three were chains with between one and three branches each. This means that the total number of sites using Top Notch was 11. From the four institutions, two were either not using the most up-to-date version of Top Notch and/or were not using MEL. The remaining two institutions, ICPNA Chiclayo and ICPNA Cusco, took part in the research.

ICPNA Chiclayo has a main site and three branches. ICPNA Cusco also has a main site and one branch. These institutions were, therefore, the only institutions and sites using the newest edition of Top Notch, MEL and ActiveTeach in Peru at the time of the research, and represented 50% of all institutions and 55% of all sites using Top Notch. Table 1 provides a summary of the initial criteria drawn, the final criteria used and the reasons behind the decisions leading to the final sample.

Table 1: Original and final sampling criteria

Criteria type	Original inclusion criteria	Inclusions and criteria met
Institutional criteria per country		
Type of adoption¹ and experience in using Top Notch (non-negotiable criteria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most recent edition is used by the institution. • The full package is used, including the: Student's Book, teacher's book (whether using the print version or PDFs in ActiveTeach), MEL and ActiveTeach. • Institutions using the workbook will be included in the study, but the workbook is not an essential component for selection. • At least two institutions with more than one years' experience of using the Top Notch package. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four institutions used Top Notch at the time of the research, of which three were chains with between one and three branches each. This means that the total number of sites using Top Notch was 11. • From the four institutions, two were either not using the most up-to-date version of Top Notch and/or were not using MEL. • ICPNA Chiclayo has a main site and three branches. ICPNA Cusco also has a main site and one branch. These institutions were, therefore, the only institutions and sites using the newest edition of Top Notch, MEL and ActiveTeach in Peru at the time of the research, and represented 50% of all institutions and 55% of all sites using Top Notch.
Size of adoption per institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions with the highest number of students (e.g., serving university students and not in-service company courses, which have small numbers of students and are also hard to access). • At least one institution with one of the highest numbers of students using Top Notch, one medium and one small. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These criteria were abandoned given the small number of institutions available for selection. • One of the selected institutions has 4,500 students and the other about 6,000.

¹ Adoption is defined as the number of books sold per institution.

Criteria type	Original inclusion criteria	Inclusions and criteria met
Levels taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideally, focus should be placed on courses that have the largest number of students. If possible, one institution whose program includes all Top Notch levels (preferable criterion). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the institutions selected, the large majority of students were concentrated in Fundamentals and Level 1. Fundamentals and Level 1 students were interviewed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamentals and Level 1 classes were observed
Type of institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional variation is preferable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both institutions are American Binationals.²
Institutional effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rating of effectiveness by an external regulatory body. If the above criterion cannot be applied, we should consider the following: two institutions that are perceived to have influence on others; their reputation in the country; institutions' success in national exams; their support of government initiatives and associations; the number of accreditations they are awarded; the number of students that complete their courses; the level students reach when they complete their courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both institutions hold a certificate of accreditation from the Commission of English Language Programme Accreditation (CEA)
Geographical spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions are located in different regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICPNA Chiclayo is located in the Lambayeque region in northern Peru. ICPNA Cusco is located in the Cusco region, in the southern highlands.
Length of courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one or two institutions teach full-length and short courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions offered mainly short courses of four and five months, with enrolments taking place monthly.

² American Binationals are cultural institutions that provide English language courses, library facilities and cultural events for the community.

Criteria type	Original inclusion criteria	Inclusions and criteria met
Teacher		
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New and experienced teachers. (Experienced teachers should have more than one year working with Top Notch.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teacher criteria were abandoned to reduce institutional burden.
Comfort with technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one teacher who the institution believes is comfortable with technology and has used MEL effectively to deliver Top Notch lessons. 	
Courses experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one teacher per institution who has experience of how the course was taught before Top Notch. 	
Courses taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers who teach long and short courses. 	

Methods

We used a multiple case-study design to conduct the study. To conceptualize the study design and manage the development of the research instruments, we were guided by the Consolidated Framework of Implementation Research (CFIR) devised in 2009. The CFIR appeared relatively exhaustive. We undertook an exercise to reduce the number of areas to be examined to better fit with the study's aims and to allow themes to be explored in depth.

A brief outline of the three overarching categories of investigation and of a small sample of the sub-categories is provided below. The first two categories were part of the CFIR framework, details of which can be found in Appendix A. We added a third category, which referred to perceptions of impact, given that it was an important part of our research questions:

- **The 'what' of the intervention:** components used to teach English, structural and processual, and their organization.
- **The 'why' and 'how' of the intervention:** the intervention characteristics; inner settings, such as the priority placed on the use of Top Notch with MEL; institutional goals and whether and how they are enacted; the usefulness of the 'intervention', etc.
- **The perceived impact of the intervention:** on the department/institution as a whole; on students' and teachers' access and engagement; on student achievement, etc.

Methods used to collect the data included: a student questionnaire, a teacher questionnaire, a pre-questionnaire filled in by the English co-ordinators, staff interviews, student focus groups and student MEL data analysis.

Student and teacher questionnaires

Development of the questionnaires

The student and teacher questionnaires were developed with two aims in mind: 1. That they could be used in different countries (Mexico, Peru, and Colombia for Top Notch and Turkey and Poland for a previous study on a similar product), and 2. That they would elicit robust evidence to address the study's aims and objectives.

To achieve these aims we were guided by the conceptual framework used for the study. We:

- Acknowledged, evaluated and, where appropriate, adapted or revised questions already used in questionnaires developed within Pearson for similar research purposes.
- Were guided by questionnaires used in other research studies (e.g., Dorneyei with Taguchi 2010; national student questionnaires used by universities, etc.).
- Consulted the Pearson product development teams and local Pearson efficacy leads, who have a deep understanding of both the products and the local context in which the products operate.
- Took advice from other researchers in our Impact Evaluation team in terms of the design.
- Elicited feedback from co-ordinators or teachers and students through a pilot.

The development of the student and teacher questionnaires was supported by a group of key stakeholders who had the knowledge and experience to support the robustness of the instruments. Table 2 outlines the individuals involved in the process, their knowledge and expertise, and the tasks they performed.

After feedback was sought and contextual information was adapted, the student questionnaire was translated into Polish and Spanish by the Poland, Mexico, and Colombia efficacy leads and was piloted. Pilots involved one round in Poland and two rounds in Colombia, including three institutions and 18 students in total³. Following the pilots, relevant adjustments were made. Draft and final student questionnaires were completed by the Impact Evaluation team in English and were then transferred to the final student questionnaire for Peru in Spanish. The teacher questionnaire was in English and, due to time constraints, it was not piloted.

³ Pilots included 15 students from Colombia (five in the first round of piloting and ten in the second round) and three students from Poland.

Table 2: Stakeholders involved in the development of the questionnaire, experience and task performed

Stakeholder	Experience	Task performed
English, Global Impact Evaluation team: Elpida Ahtaridou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise in methodological and quantitative and qualitative instrument design • Expertise in product research for different purposes and for the different stages of product development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed the questionnaire • Reviewed previously developed instruments used in internal and external to Pearson research and their related reports • Decided on which questions might be appropriate for reuse • Drafted new questions
Top Notch Portfolio Manager: Sherri Pemberton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth knowledge of Top Notch and of the different country needs and issues in relation to its use and delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided feedback on previously used questions from internal to Pearson questionnaires • Reviewed questionnaire items and drafted new items, when appropriate
Efficacy Geography Lead: Cecilia Rodriguez Jadrosich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in developing and conducting research • Deep understanding of the study aims and of individual institutions' needs, and issues related to the delivery of Top Notch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided feedback on previously used questions from internal to Pearson questionnaires • Reviewed questionnaire items • Translated, culturally adapted and piloted the student questionnaire • Created the questionnaire online
Co-ordinators, teachers and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth knowledge of Top Notch in their institution and related issues • Understanding of terminology used at the institution and by their students related to Top Notch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloted the student questionnaire • Provided feedback on potential issues with questions and wording

Questionnaires structure and content

The first page of the questionnaires explained informed consent, gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and use of data, confidentiality, data-protection procedures and the voluntary nature of participation. In brief, the student questionnaire aimed to draw out information about:

- the course students were attending
- their motivation for learning English
- their comfort with the use of technology
- the use and frequency of different Top Notch components in class
- the usefulness of different components and features
- perceptions of the impact of Top Notch and of its components on access, learning behaviors and attitudes, performance, preparation for their next stage in their learning, and ultimate goal
- the likelihood of recommending Top Notch and MEL to other students.

The teacher questionnaire aimed to gather similar data to the student questionnaire and gain further information on teaching practices in the classroom and the training available to them.

The student questionnaire comprised 25 questions and the teacher questionnaire 42 questions. The majority of questions were closed, using a four-point Likert scale that included a number of sub-questions. Open-ended questions were also used to gather qualitative responses related to student views on the most useful features, benefits, challenges and areas for improvement.

Administration, collection and analysis of the student and teacher questionnaires

ICPNA Chiclayo administered print copies of the student questionnaire, and an online student questionnaire, designed in Google Forms, was administered by ICPNA Cusco. Print copies of the student questionnaire were distributed to students by their teachers in July 2017. Distribution was opportunistic. The online questionnaires were distributed by ICPNA Cusco via email to all students who used Top Notch. Students were informed of the research and of its purpose in advance, and their participation was voluntary. The teacher questionnaire was constructed using Google Forms in English and was distributed via email by both institutions.

All the student and teacher questionnaires which were filled in online were automatically returned to the research team. The print questionnaires filled in by students were collected by teachers and handed to the researcher on the day of their visit. Spanish native speakers, who also spoke English at a proficient level, inputted each of the print questionnaires in Google Forms in English. Student and teacher datasets were received in Microsoft Excel or .csv files. The data were imported in the R platform (R Core Team, 2017) using standard input/output commands of the readxl package (Wickham & Bryan, 2017).

The following processes for data-cleaning were applied:

- The number of columns, the number of rows and the type of each of the variables were confirmed for each dataset.
- The data were scanned for suspiciously large numbers of missing data, unexpected values and other possible irregularities.
- For each dataset, the online questionnaires were checked to confirm that there were no missing questions.
- The value labels for each of the variables were confirmed.

A total of 289 student questionnaires were returned: 125 from ICPNA Chiclayo, and 164 from ICPNA Cusco. One student submitted a blank questionnaire and was excluded from the analysis. (Students who completed a questionnaire may or may not have participated in the focus groups.)

Overall, the student sample is relatively homogeneous; all respondents are beginners as regards their level of English competency and the majority study in relatively short courses of between one and five months. Table 3 provides a summary of respondents per institution. All respondents come from the first two beginner levels, with the large majority (86%, 247/288) from Fundamentals and the remaining 14% (41/288) from the Beginner level. Nearly all respondents from Cusco and most (70%, 87/124) of students from Chiclayo were studying in Fundamentals. The majority of students (56%, 160/287) were attending one month courses, although the percentage is skewed by Cusco, where almost all students reported that they were attending one month courses. In Chiclayo, the majority of students (56%, 69/123) were studying in five-month courses, and 31%, (38/123) in two-month courses. The remaining 13% (16/123) reported studying on one-year courses. Further, 50% (145/288) of students were in the beginning of their course and 50% (143/288) either at the middle or at the end of their course. Arguably, given the short duration of their courses, we would not expect a wide difference in their perceptions based on the length of time they were studying.

Table 3: Number of student responses analyzed by institution and level, student questionnaire

	Chiclayo	Cusco	Total
Course attended			
Fundamentals	87	160	247
Beginner	37	4	41
Total	124 (43%)	164 (57%)	288 (100%)
Course duration			
1 month	0	160	160
2 months	38	2	40
5 months	69	0	69
1 year	16	2	18
Total	123 (1 blank) (100%)	164 (100%)	287 (100%)
Length of time in course			
Beginning of the course	76	69	145
Middle of the course	31	94	125
End of the course	17	1	18
Total	124	164	288 ⁴

⁴ Percentages have been rounded. In cases where the total was 101% after more than one of the percentages were rounded, one of the percentages was rounded down. This made no difference to the results.

As regards the teacher questionnaire, we received a total of 37 responses, with a relatively equal spread between the two institutions: 20 from ICPNA Chiclayo (54%) and 17 from ICPNA Cusco (46%). All teacher questionnaires received were used in the analysis. (Teachers who completed a questionnaire may or may not have participated in the interviews.)

All teachers who responded to the questionnaire taught either both Fundamentals and Level 1 or one of the two levels, although the majority taught across both levels. The majority of teacher respondents from ICPNA Chiclayo (13/20) were teaching about 20 classes with students studying in Fundamentals to Level 3. The remaining seven teachers were teaching up to four classes either in Fundamentals and/or Level 1 or at a mix of levels. The majority of Cusco teachers (53%, 9/17) were teaching few classes either in Fundamentals and/or Level 1. Seven teachers were teaching in about 16 classes across levels and 1 teacher taught a few classes at different levels.

The majority of teachers had been teaching for more than six years (62%, 23/37 of the respondents), while only six teachers had up to two years of teaching experience. There was relatively even distribution in terms of years of experience between the two institutions. Most of ICPNA Chiclayo's teachers had experience of teaching with Top Notch, whilst the majority of ICPNA Cusco teachers had one year of experience with the package. Teacher experience with teaching Top Notch in particular was relatively split between one year (49%, 17/37) and three years and above (37%, 13/37). Table 4 provides the relevant details.

Table 4: Teachers years of experience in teaching and years of experience in teaching with Top Notch, teacher questionnaire

Institution	Teaching experience in years					Teaching experience using Top Notch in years			
	Up to 2	3 - 5	6 – 10	Above 10	Total	1	2	3 or more	Total
ICPNA Chiclayo	4	5	5	6	20	4	4	12	20
ICPNA Cusco	2	3	5	7	17	13	1	1	15
Total	6 (16%)	8 (22%)	10 (27%)	13 (35%)	37 (100%)	17 (49%)	5 (14%)	13 (37%)	35 (100%)

Teachers were also asked to rate their confidence in teaching English and comfort with technology on a scale from 1 to 10. Overall, the large majority of teachers felt relatively confident in teaching English, with 57% (21/37) scoring their confidence as 10/10, and the same proportion scoring 10/10 for using technology (see Table 5).

Table 5: Teacher self-reported confidence in teaching English and their comfort with technology, teacher questionnaire

Institution	Confidence in teaching English					Comfort with technology					
	Rating					Rating					
	6	8	9	10	Total	6	7	8	9	10	Total
ICPNA Chiclayo	1	3	3	13	20	2	1	4	2	11	20
ICPNA Cusco	0	3	6	8	17	0	2	2	3	10	17
Total	1 (3%)	6 (16%)	9 (24%)	21 (57%)	37 (100%)	2 (5%)	3 (8%)	6 (16%)	5 (14%)	21 (57%)	37 (100%)

For both questionnaires and for each question with discrete answers, responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Where appropriate, frequency tables, cross-tabulations, visualizations and descriptive statistics were produced using standard commands of the sjPlot package (Lüdecke, 2017) and of the tidyverse package (Wickham, 2017). Inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, correlations) were produced using standard R base functions, but more advanced analyses, e.g., reliability analysis for Cronbach's alpha and Rasch analysis, were run using the psych package (Revelle, 2017) and the TAM package (Robitzsch et al., 2017). Due to time constraints, responses to the open-ended questions in for both the student and teacher questionnaires were not analyzed.

Co-ordinator's pre-questionnaire

The co-ordinator's pre-questionnaire aimed to gain an understanding of the context, course structure and implementation model used in the different institutions before the day of the visit. It also supported the development of more targeted questions to be asked during the visit. In more detail, data collected through the pre-questionnaire focused on:

- **Context:** factual information on the student and teacher numbers studying using Top Notch, the number of classes offered and the length of the courses offered.

- **Classroom time:** details on how classroom time is structured, including the number of face-to-face lessons weekly, the length of class time, the structure of the lessons, preparation required by teachers and students before the lesson, etc.
- **Assessment:** how assessment, both formal and informal, is structured, including an understanding of what type of tests students take and the conditions under which they complete them.
- **Homework:** whether or not students are required to complete homework, the place and suggested time for completing homework, whether homework is obligatory, if students are allowed one or more attempts in MEL and other details on how MEL is used.
- **Tracking student usage of MEL:** how teachers track student usage of MEL and what they do with the data they collect.
- **Tracking student performance:** how student performance is tracked, who is responsible for tracking it and the use of the performance data collected.

The co-ordinators' pre-questionnaire followed the design processes and quality-control mechanisms outlined in the student and teacher questionnaire section. The pre-questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions. Co-ordinators were sent the pre-questionnaire at least a month before the day of the visit and were asked to return it two weeks before the visit. To reduce the burden on co-ordinators, they were advised to leave the open-ended questions blank if they felt that they had no time to fill them in.

A total of four pre-questionnaires were collected, two from each institution.

Student focus groups and staff interviews

The design and quality assurance mechanisms for the focus groups and interviews followed the same process as the student questionnaires. Student focus groups and one-to-one interviews with teachers were held on the universities premises in July 2017 and were conducted by our Pearson researcher who led the research and the design of the schedules. No student or teacher was excluded from participation. All students and teachers chosen by the institutions were interviewed.

The institution explained the purpose of the study and the procedure to all potential participants, and teachers and students had the opportunity to decline. No incentives for participating were offered, and both the institution and the research participants could withdraw from the study at any point during the lifespan of the research project. Those who agreed to take part were asked to sign a consent form and agreed to the focus groups/interviews to be recorded.

Student focus groups

Institutions were asked to arrange two student focus groups with between five to ten students in each focus group. Students were to be selected randomly from those students who had agreed to take part in the study and from classes held on the day of the visit. The visit was arranged based on the availability of classes and a convenient time for the institutions.

Twenty-one students were reached through a total of four focus groups, two in each of the institutions: nine from ICPNA Chiclayo and 12 from ICPNA Cusco. Focus groups were conducted in English, with a translator at hand who assisted students, when they felt they needed it, to elaborate on their response or better to comprehend the questions posed to them. The translator's help was required very few times.

Mature adults were purposefully not interviewed, given that children and young adults are the larger student population studying in these universities. Participants' ages ranged from nine to 20 years, with children being the large majority of interviewees. Student interviewees had been learning using Top Notch for at least six months. Interviewing a more homogeneous group of students allowed for more compatible views to be recorded. Groups were mixed in terms of gender; a good balance was reached (10 females and 11 males).

To further support the validity of the focus-group interviews, a more informal conversational interview style was followed. Although key areas of the schedule were covered most times, the researcher allowed more questions to emerge from individuals' answers, asked in the natural course of things. This approach aimed to make participants feel more at ease. It also aimed to reduce item order effect. In addition to the conversation naturally 'reordering' the questions and themes (as outlined in the interview schedules), the researcher also specifically asked questions in different order for each focus group. To reduce the potential of dominant and shy bias, the researcher invited individuals to offer their views, one by one or randomly, when they were seen to not take part in the discussion. The same approach was taken if a 'declaration' was made by a participant.⁵ Overall, participants were forthcoming in refuting a pattern or a view made by a colleague of theirs, if they indeed had a different view. At times, salient questions were asked to each one of the members of the group, either in random order or starting from whoever sat on the right or left side of the table.

⁵ 'Declaration' refers to a pattern mentioned by a participant. The researcher then seeks to confirm or refute that pattern by collecting data from the rest of the group.

Teacher interviews

A total of 11 one-to-one staff interviews were conducted, each lasting 45 minutes to one hour each. All interviews were conducted in English. The table below outlines a summary of the interviews conducted.

Table 6: Summary of staff interviews conducted per institution and role, interviews

Institution	Staff role		
	Director	Co-ordinator	Teacher
ICPNA Chiclayo	1	2	3
ICPNA Cusco	1	1	3
Total per role	2	3	6
Total interviews	11		

To further support the reliability of the teacher interviews, only slight differences between the interview schedules for each role (director, co-ordinator and teacher) were made, with the interviewer asking follow-up questions for clarification when necessary.

Analysis of interview and focus-group data

Audio recordings from the focus groups and interviews were transcribed in full and transferred into the NVivo qualitative analysis software. Two researchers supported the coding of the data; the first researcher provided the initial coding based on the CFRI framework, based on the CFRI framework used to guide the study initially deductively, (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second researcher completed the coding across all transcripts.

The initial coding included 12 primary codes and 42 secondary codes. After the coding structure was created in NVivo, the two researchers coded the same three transcripts, separately. The three transcripts were selected by the first research randomly, they represented 10% of the total interview transcripts available (Hodson, 1999) and were between 10 to 20 pages long each (Miles and Huberman, 1884). The aim of the exercise was twofold: a) to derive final coding structure and assess the degree of agreement; and b) to support the consistency in the approach to coding between the two researchers.

The deductive coding structure was treated as an overall structure rather than a strict outline within which the researchers needed to fit the data. Thus, as the researchers read the transcripts, they adapted the structure to better suit the research questions and to include first and second order codes that had risen inductively from the data. Discussion between the two researchers adjudicated any coding disagreements, involving codes being moved, deleted, merged, split or renamed within the hierarchy. This process resulted to a final coding structure involving a total of 7 first codes and 30 secondary and third order codes.

At the outset, the researchers agreed that a unitization strategy which focused on meaning units would be pursued. That meant that codable units of text varied in length from a few lines to a whole paragraph. Key to the coding was that contextual information was included to further support researchers reach common ground in their coding decisions. Thus, paragraphs before and after the coded text were included most times for contextualization. At times, the data within the code related to more than one first and/or secondary codes. In this way, a balance was sought between condensing data for analysis and retaining the uniqueness of meaning.

The proportion agreement method was used to understand the agreement between the two researchers. Although this method comes with limitations, e.g. it does not take into account that researchers might agree occasionally by chance (Bernard 2000), more complex methods were not deemed appropriate given that: a) not all of our codes had equal probability of being used; b) multiple codings on a text unit, which we followed, creates problems for calculating agreement between researchers with some statistics because they require that only one code is applied to a unit of text (Burla et al. 2008); c) our aim, from the outset, was not to generate variables for use in statistical analysis. Our aim was to systematically classify and retrieve text using clear, distinct definitions to do so; d) this was an exploratory study for which other researchers have argued that the simple proportion agreement method is an acceptable approach (Kurasaki 2000).

Overall, the two researchers were relatively aligned in their assigning of codes and in the process followed to derive codes. This meant that they were satisfied in proceeding with the coding of the full set of transcripts without replicating the activity. The relative agreement between the researchers could have been due: a) the knowledge and experience they built through using the same coding system in three similar research projects; b) their good knowledge of the research and of its aims and objectives from the outset; c) the fitness of purposes of the CFRI framework sections used; d) the clear structure of the product components and features examined; e) the simplicity of the coding system and the clear and explicit definitions given to the secondary codes so that meaning was not sacrificed in favor of simplicity. (Despite the relatively large number of codes, they were relatively distinct in their definition.)

Patterns were identified not only by looking at repeated occurrences but also by similarity, 'declaration' and confirmation, missing patterns expected to be present and co-occurrences. Data collected from the other sources used in this study and their findings also supported the development of patterns. In addition, findings from four similar studies conducted at the same time as this research

on Top Notch and its English counterpart, Speakout, supported the development and our understanding of different patterns. These studies sought to answer the same research questions as this research project and, overall, used the same research instruments to collect their data. Finally, consideration was placed on whether emerging patterns appeared to be congruent with prior hypotheses and relevant literature (Hopkins & Ahtaridou, 2009; Quartaroli, 2009).

Classroom observations and post-observation debriefs

A structured classroom observation schedule was used to understand how Top Notch materials were implemented in practice. Classroom observation did not aim to evaluate practice. Observations focused on the following areas of exploration:

- **Lesson preparation:** what that entailed and why the lessons were set in a particular way.
- **Exposure to materials:** what materials were used during the lessons by students and teachers.
- **How materials were used:** e.g., if materials were used to support individual activities or pair activities, etc.
- **Implementation:** whether the teacher guidance was implemented; if teachers differentiated well for students' different needs and levels and how they did it in practice; whether guidance was given to students on how to use the materials; the pace of the lesson; and the types of activities used in the classroom based on the topic learnt.
- **Navigation of materials:** whether they were easy or hard to navigate and whether support was requested by students during the lesson.
- **Feedback:** from teachers to students or from peer to peer.
- **Technology integration:** whether teachers and students had access to technology in the classroom and how it was used.
- **Engagement:** whether students were on task during the lessons, and how they exemplified it, e.g., by gesturing or asking questions, etc.

The observations also included three sections that required researchers to describe what students and teachers did at the beginning, middle and end of the lesson, and to record whether the lesson followed the Teacher's Edition and whether anything was done differently.

Detailed descriptors were used for each category of exploration outlined in the observation schedule. Descriptors aimed to support researchers to record observations systematically and consistently. The observation schedule and associated descriptors were used in a previous Pearson study published by [What Works Clearinghouse](#) and were slightly modified to better meet the needs of this study.

After the observation, debriefs with teachers took place, each lasting 20 to 30 minutes. The debriefs aimed to understand teacher perceptions on how the session went, the use of materials and its usefulness when teaching the specific lesson, barriers and suggestions for improvement.

MEL student data

A framework was developed in order to extract and report on the MEL student data. The framework aimed to collect usage and performance data as outlined in Table 7. Based on the data received, it was not always possible or appropriate to follow all the analyses outlined below. This meant that adaptations took place.

Table 7: Summary of framework that guided the MEL data extraction

Item	Data collection, analysis and presentation
Assignments and practices ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of assignments/practices and tests assigned. • Percentage of completions by institution, level and class. • Average number of completions by institution, level, class and individual student from the total number assigned.
Time on task ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of students' time on task on assignments/practices and tests per institution, level, class and student.
Attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of attempts on assignments/practices per institution and level.
Assignments/practices scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average percentage achieved in first, last and highest attempt per institution, level and class. • Percentage of students achieving within different grade boundaries per institution.
Test scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average percentage achieved on test scores per institution, level and class. • Percentage of students achieving within different score boundaries.
Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement between scores on first and highest attempts at assignments/practices. • Relationship between individuals' average assignment/practice scores and percentage of assignments/practices completed. • Relationship between individuals' average test scores and number of assignments/practices completed.
Reliability/validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlation between average student score on assignment/practices. • Correlation between average student practice scores per unit. (In the case where many correlations were computed, the results were presented in the form of quartiles to avoid the presentation of too long tables.)

Data was extracted in July 2017. Due to the manual extraction of the MEL data and the short timeframe in which to extract it, a total of 20 classes per institution was agreed for analysis. The sampling strategy involved two steps:

⁶ MEL records student scores on assignments and practices. Exercises available in the system can be assigned by teachers. These exercises automatically show as assignments. Exercises not assigned show as practices. Although some exercises might show as practices, they might have assigned to students verbally by their teachers in class, something that seems to happen often. It is not possible to know which practices have been assigned by teachers and which might have been undertaken by students on their own accord.

⁷ Time on task is purely the time spent on assignments/practices and tests, not log-in time.

- stratified sampling to include all level courses offered at the institutions, most recently completed courses and courses with more than five students; and
- randomly selected classes from the remaining sample.

A total of 42 classes were extracted into .csv files: 22 classes from ICPNA Chiclayo and 20 from ICPNA Cusco across Fundamentals and Top Notch Level 3 (intermediate).⁸ (In some cases it was not possible to sample a total of 20 classes because of the small number of classes or students.) The classes extracted ranged from 2014 to 2017. The classes extracted from ICPNA Chiclayo were from 2014 to 2016, and those extracted from ICPNA Cusco were from early 2017. All courses lasted one month. Table 8 provides a summary of the number of classes extracted per institution and level.

The 42 classes included data for a total of 671 students, 282 from ICPNA Chiclayo and 389 from ICPNA Cusco. However, when we examined the data, there were no data for 113 students from the Top Notch Level 1 for ICPNA Chiclayo. This meant that the actual number of ICPNA Chiclayo students analyzed was 169 and the total number of student data analyzed across the two institutions was 558.

Table 8: Number of classes extracted per institution and level

	No of classes				Total
	Fundamentals	Top Notch Level 1	Top Notch Level 2	Top Notch Level 3	
ICPNA Chiclayo	7	7	7	1	22
ICPNA Cusco	10	10	N/A	N/A	20
Total	17	17	7	1	42

⁸ Too Notch levels are: Fundamentals

Analysis of assignments/practices and tests

Student performance on practice/assignments and tests was analysed. Statistical means and other descriptive statistics were calculated for each analysis. Student performance was analyzed using the score boundaries set by the platform: 90–100% (A); 80–89% (B); 70–79% (C); 60–69% (D); 50–59% (E); and 0–49% (F).

All scores of 0% were excluded from the analysis. The reasons for this exclusion were as follows:

- Students were given multiple attempts to answer assignment questions. Thus, it is highly unlikely that a 0% score represents a student who had tried to complete an assignment multiple times and had failed each time.
- A student who received a 0% score because she/he had not submitted an assignment/practice or had not submitted it on time, had made no attempt to complete an assignment/practice.
- A teacher might not have marked a student's response to open ended questions.

In all of the above cases, we are confident that 0% does not correspond to the real ability of students. Therefore, including 0% scores in the overall analysis would have artificially skewed the distribution of the scores. For transparency, analysis including the 0% scores is included in the report's appendices.

For each assignment/practice, the database reported one overall score per a student. There was no information in the data regarding individual items.

Assignments/practices

Assignment scores are reported based on the highest attempt (MEL captures the first, last and highest attempts.) We decided to use the highest attempt because we wanted to understand the progress students had made by the end of the course, instead of recording their average performance from the beginning to the end of the course. In addition, a comparison of the highest and last attempt scores showed that there was no difference between them in terms of student performance.

Data for a total of 588 students were received.⁹ From those, 189 students from ICPNA Cusco completed assignments, of which 10 were excluded because they had 0% scores. Students from ICPNA Chiclayo had not completed any assignments. A total of 14,299 assignments from ICPNA Cusco were originally included in the dataset, and a total of 8,332 were analyzed. 42% of assignments (5,967) were excluded as they were scored at 0%.

⁹ Some students in the sample completed either practices or assignments. Some completed both.

For practices, data from a total of 432 students from the original sample received (161 from ICPNA Chiclayo and 271 from ICPNA Cusco) were identified and analyzed. A total of 16,581 practices were originally included in the dataset, and 16,190 were analyzed. 2% of practices (391) were excluded as they were scored at 0%.

Table 9: Practice analysis: number of students whose data was collected and analyzed and number of practices completed, excluded and analyzed

Level	Total number of students		Total number of practices		
	Collected	Analyzed	Completed	Excluded having a 0% score	Analysed
ICPNA Chiclayo	161	161	6,267	182 (3%)	6,085
ICPNA Cusco	271	271	10,314	209 (2%)	10,105
Total	432	432	16,581	391 (2%)	16,190

Analysis of student progress on assignments/practices

To gain an insight into student progress on assignments/practices, we analyzed data for 482 students in total (from the .csv files received). For the progress analysis, we removed all practices or assignments included in the files that were not attempted at least twice or that had a 0% or 100% score.

Exclusions included five students from ICPNA Chiclayo and one student from ICPNA Cusco, who had either 0% or 100% scores in all assignments/practices; and 1,610 assignments/practices (14%) which had a 0% or 100% score. A summary of the number of student data collected and analyzed and of the assignments/practices completed, excluded and analyzed per institution is provided in Table 10. After exclusions were applied, a total of 9,524 assignments and practices (1,190 from ICPNA Chiclayo and 8,334 from ICPNA Cusco) were analyzed.

Table 10: Progress analysis: number of students whose data was collected and analyzed, and assignments/practices completed, excluded and analyzed

Level	Total number of students		Total number of practices and assignments		
	MEL data collected	MEL data analyzed	Completed	Excluded having a 0% or 100% score	Analysed
ICPNA Chiclayo	120	115	1,662	472 (28% - 415 zero scores and 57 100% scores)	1,190
ICPNA Cusco	368	367	9,472	1,138 (12% - 936 zero scores and 202 100% score)	8,334
Total	488	482	11,134	1,610 (14%)	9,524

Analysis of student test scores

Data from tests were not analyzed and therefore are not presented in this report. This is because any reliable inferences could not have been drawn from the tests. Very few were assigned and completed, averaging at two tests, which is misleading given the large variability between classes.

Reliability and validity of MEL assignments/practices/tests

To investigate the reliability and validity of student scores from assignments/practices and tests, we estimated the following:

- correlation between students' average assignment/practice scores and % of assignment/practices completed;
- correlation between average practice score and average test score;
- correlation between test scores;
- correlation between the average unit assignment/practice.

To gauge the internal consistency of unit scores as a measurement of student performance, we computed the correlations between the students' average assignment/practice score on different units. The first step was to compute, for each student, the average assignment/practice score for all of the exercises/assignments within each unit. Then, these average assignment/practice scores for each student and for each unit were correlated between them across all students.

When appropriate, both Spearman and Pearson correlations were computed and presented to accommodate for skewed distributions of the data. The effect of outliers was also investigated wherever appropriate. Removing a limited number of outliers did not change the values of the correlations significantly.

Method for deriving findings on perceptions of impact

To derive findings on the perceptual impact statements the following method was used.

- Student questionnaire results took prominence. This was because we believe that students are the most important voice in the learning process and because the student questionnaire data have the largest samples. Everything above 50% was seen as the majority. If most of the questionnaire questions on the same outcome, e.g. access, showed above 50% of respondents to have a positive view, then the outcome was also considered to be positive. 70% and above was seen as a 'very positive' outcome. When results were between 50% and 70% the outcome or the component(s) 'assessed' were seen to need some level of improvement. When the results of two out of the three main Top Notch components (the students' book, ActiveTeach or MEL) or the majority of features and/or skills for each of the component were positive, then the overall finding about the outcome category was also seen to be positive.
- In the same realm, if less than half of the areas under investigation relating to the components' features and/or skills were below 50% in the student questionnaire, the outcome was considered not positive. When questionnaire results were skewed by one institution, this is mentioned in the report and is taken into account to derive overall findings.
- The approach to the teacher data was the same as that used for the student data. When students and teacher data agreed, the outcome was seen as positive. There was never a disagreement between teacher and student data, because at no point were any two or more of the Top Notch components or half of the components' features/skills were negative. In cases where individual components, features or skills had negative results, this was clearly stated in the relevant section(s) of the report.
- When data from the student focus groups and teacher interviews agree with the student and teacher questionnaire results, the outcome is considered positive. When there is disagreement between the two, if the finding from the student focus groups and teacher interviews does not derive from a strong pattern, then the outcome is still considered positive. If the finding from

the student focus groups and teacher interviews derives from a strong pattern, then results are considered mixed or the outcome negative.

- If student focus groups and teacher interviews point to what one would consider a 'deal breaker' (the organization switching to another product or students found to not use the product and able to provide a number of reasons that point to their dissatisfaction for doing so), even if the questionnaire results are positive, the outcome or the feature/skill is seen to not have had a positive impact, and this is mentioned clearly in the findings.
- When observational data disagreed with the student focus groups and teacher interviews and quantitative data, it was thought that a judgement would need to be made on which would take precedence, based on the strength of the evidence collected. This was not necessary, however, as no disagreement was found between observational and interview or focus-group data. In all cases, they were either in agreement or complimented each other.
- Four researchers who worked on the Top Notch and Speakout research studies conducted in 2017 (which had the same research questions and used the same research instruments) read the results multiple times and independently applied the method outlined above. When there were disagreements, a reapplication of the method took place by each of the researchers. Subsequent meetings took place to reach a consensus.

Discussion of findings

In this section, we discuss the study results. The discussion is based on the data outlined in the results section in Appendix B and includes data from the student and teacher questionnaires, the co-ordinators' pre-questionnaires, the student focus groups, the teacher interviews and the MEL student data analyses.

A total of 11 sites across four institutions were using Top Notch at the time of the research. The data collected and analyzed are from the only two institutions in Peru that used both the most up-to-date version of Top Notch with MEL and ActiveTeach at the time. Data from student and teacher questionnaires, student focus groups and teacher interviews, and from MEL, were collected from students and teachers studying and working at the institutions' main sites. Although this data might represent the views and online behaviors of students and teachers of the main sites, arguably, one could assume that implementation data could overall represent practices across all six sites, given that the same model within the ICPNA Chiclayo and its three branches and ICPNA Cusco and its one branch is meant to be followed.

As regards findings from the surveys, the perspective is mainly that of students at Fundamentals and Level 1 and students who attended relatively short courses of one to five months. Students in the focus groups were studying across levels. The teachers' perspective from the survey and interviews, in the main, is that of those teaching across the Top Notch levels, whilst all 37 teachers who responded to the survey taught in Fundamentals and/or Level 1. The views are also those of teachers who are relatively experienced overall in teaching English but relatively new to teaching with Top Notch – the majority had been teaching English for more than three years and teaching with Top Notch for up to two years. The majority of less experienced teachers were at Cusco, whilst the majority of Chiclayo's teachers had been teaching with Top Notch for more than two years. MEL data analysis includes students from Fundamentals to Level 3.

When findings are not presented for an institution, this is because no noteworthy differences were identified between them.

Findings are grouped under the relevant research question in this order:

- Student attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL
- Teachers' attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL
- Implementation of Top Notch with MEL
- Learnings for teaching and learning from the MEL data
- Perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on students

- Perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on teachers, teaching and the institution.

Student attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL

Finding 1: The large majority of students reported a preference for Top Notch with MEL and the use of technology in their learning.

Overall, students found the use of MEL and ActiveTeach forward-thinking and innovative and seemed to feel proud to be engaged in learning with resources they perceived to be unique to their institution. In the focus groups, students were highly enthusiastic about Top Notch and the advantages of using MEL because they found it dynamic and motivating. In the student survey, 90% (234/261) of students liked the combination of teacher instruction and independent practice using MEL, and 68% (176/258) said they preferred completing practices in MEL to doing them in print. In addition, 91% (242/267) of students reported that they were more engaged, 86% (227/265) that they were more motivated and 85% (220/258) that they enjoyed learning more in classes that used MEL compared to classes that did not. On interview, teachers from ICPNA Cusco suggested that their students were more engaged in learning in classes where MEL was used compared to those where it was not.

Teachers' attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL

Finding 2: Data suggests that, overall, teachers were in favor of using MEL and ActiveTeach, and the majority had made them an integral part of their teaching.

All data confirmed that, overall, teachers embraced digital technology and were highly enthusiastic about the benefits of MEL and ActiveTeach in their teaching, preferring MEL to using the paper workbook. In addition, nearly three-quarters of students (74%, 190/256) thought that their teacher was in favor of using MEL, and 92% (244/264) reported that their teacher had made MEL an integral part of their learning.

Implementation of Top Notch with MEL

Finding 3: Top Notch’s focus on communication was key to whether an institution decided to adopt it as well as the use of MEL to accommodate students’ interest in technology, raise the profile of the institutions and bridge classroom and home learning.

A key aim at both institutions is to improve students’ speaking skills in English. Top Notch and its focus on communicative skills was seen as ideal in supporting this aim. Both institutions also wished to be at the forefront of digital innovation and believed that the use of technology in learning was the future. MEL and ActiveTeach were seen as important components for the delivery of this type of learning. The investment in MEL and ActiveTeach was also a business decision. Both institutions were clear in interviews that technology raised their profile and gave them a competitive advantage over other providers of English language learning in the area. They also suggested that student engagement in learning was imperative and that both MEL and ActiveTeach were attractive to students, who were increasingly using digital technologies in their everyday lives. Interviewees felt that MEL was a way to bridge home and school learning, a connection missing from the previous instructional models they had used.

Finding 4: Infrastructure, standardization and training for both teachers and students are key to the success of Top Notch with MEL. Important factors influencing these inputs include senior leadership commitment; the buy-in of teachers, students and parents, and the process followed by the institution to secure it. Parental investment in equipment that supports the implementation of Top Notch with MEL is also a key influence. Affordability is still an obstacle for some students.

Infrastructure investment is important given that the key components of Top Notch rely on being connected to the internet or on projecting visual or audio material. Teachers and students at both institutions have access to technology that can be used with Top Notch. ICPNA Chiclayo’s leadership has invested in a new computer lab to increase access so that students and teachers can take full advantage of the package. ICPNA Cusco also provides computer labs, wireless internet and projectors in all classrooms so that students have access to MEL and ActiveTeach. Both institutions have a designated member of staff or lab technician to support with technical problems and to provide training on MEL. In turn, institutional investment and the visibility of the benefits of their children using MEL in the computer lab can encourage parents to buy relevant equipment that supports access to and use of MEL at home. We could hypothesize that, given that the institution and the parents have placed such importance on MEL, students might also think that MEL is useful to their learning.

Key factors in ICPNA Chiclayo's investment in a computer lab was parental pressure and, for both institutions, the commitment by senior leaders to the use of technology for learning. The shared belief of senior leaders, co-ordinators and teachers that technology is necessary to institutional growth and to engaging students also seems to have a positive impact on use. The process institutions follow to decide which publisher's materials are to be used has the potential to support use. Designing an inclusive process by involving co-ordinators (and teachers) seems to support engagement. Co-ordinators become propagators of the materials and of their usefulness. They exemplify the benefits of MEL through training or in other ways to teachers. Overall, it seems important to create a cadre of MEL and ActiveTeach supporters to raise awareness among teachers, to build enthusiasm and to disseminate the institutional approach to implementation.

Standardization of practices is also important. The degree to which institutions guide their staff and articulate their expectations regarding the roll-out of a new program also influences the level of implementation. Considerations include whether all teachers are clear about the implementation model, whether all teachers follow that model, whether use is consistent and whether there are consequences for not following established norms.

ICPNA Chiclayo and ICPNA Cusco are at different stages of implementation based on the number of years MEL has been used. MEL is compulsory at both institutions and it counts towards final scores. Students and teachers agree that it is in use in the majority of classrooms and that it is an integral part of teaching and learning. Teachers have choice when it comes to implementation, so that MEL usage varies between classrooms within institutions, especially with regard to what counts towards student scores, the monitoring of use and performance in MEL, and the provision of feedback.

At ICPNA Cusco, there is a more coherent approach, and the enthusiasm for Top Notch with MEL was highly palpable in the visits as well as in the continuous reflection on the standardized and individual practices. This might be as a result of being in the early implementation phase of MEL. The lack of relevant infrastructure at ICPNA Chiclayo seems to inhibit the standardization of MEL for teachers.

Ongoing conversation among faculty during regular meetings and as part of training can support the development of shared knowledge and may be associated with greater uptake of the package as well as the consistency of teaching approaches using the materials. Training on MEL and ActiveTeach is implemented using a cascade model, with Pearson representatives training directors, co-ordinators and the lab technician. At ICPNA Cusco, training was carried out very recently, and further training is provided using a cascade model to reach all teachers over time.

Most teachers in the questionnaire reported that they were trained by the member of staff responsible for MEL, and around half of them had also experienced follow-up training/support from a co-ordinator or another teacher. In one institution, this follow-up was part of the process where co-ordinators conduct a second round of training for their staff. Sometimes, for practical reasons, teachers were trained directly by a co-ordinator or another teacher. In the minority of cases, questionnaire

respondents mentioned that they were only given handouts or that they trained themselves (3/20). One institution trains teachers in stages, given that it has a large number of teachers.

At both institutions, teachers indicated that training was useful, but many were interested in receiving top-up training. The large majority of teachers reported that their in-house training allowed them to use MEL effectively (85% of teachers at ICPNA Chiclayo and 94% at ICPNA Cusco), although it might not have been as prompt for some. 42% (8/19) of teachers at ICPNA Chiclayo and 25% (4/17) at ICPNA Cusco reported that their training took place after they started using MEL for their courses.

At both institutions, a sizable group of teachers indicated that they needed ongoing support (53% ICPNA Chiclayo and 41% ICPNA Cusco). The large majority of teachers at both institutions agreed that MEL training focused on technical aspects (92%) and 66% that it also covered how it could be used to support their teaching. In interviews, teachers welcomed top-up training on both MEL and ActiveTeach, especially on how to use more advanced features, how to motivate students to use MEL, how to use MEL data more effectively to monitor and support student learning, and how to troubleshoot common problems, such as log-in issues.

Training for students is provided by teachers and designated staff responsible for the implementation of MEL. For the most part, it is teachers who train their students in Top Notch with MEL. Based on questionnaire results, 25/35 (71%) of teachers conduct an orientation in class. For one institution, a two-part process is used to train students, where training is given by the lab technician, who is responsible for all matters related to MEL, followed by an in-class orientation. Few teachers in each institution (two at ICPNA Chiclayo and three at ICPNA Cusco) reported either that they only provided handouts to students or that they expected students to learn how to use it themselves.

The lab technician and teachers are students' main point of contact for ongoing support. The content of the training focuses on registration and navigating the platform – particularly with regard to viewing and completing assignments. One institution ensures that students are aware that MEL scores are part of their grade.

Finding 5: At both institutions, most teachers followed a relatively similar approach to assessing tasks in MEL, monitoring the gradebook and providing feedback to students weekly. Other elements varied – such as the numbers of practices to be completed and the timeframe for their completions. Teacher assessment seemed to focus on the quantity of practices completed rather than actual scores – so, recognizing effort and, for a few teachers, the resilience students showed.

Overall, teachers at both institutions seem to follow similar teaching and learning practices when using Top Notch with MEL.

Components used

Teachers at both institutions seem to take full advantage of Top Notch components and materials, with several being used very frequently and supplementary materials rarely used. Overall, data suggests that, at both institutions, the Student's Book, MEL and ActiveTeach are the core components used when teaching with Top Notch.

Although the Student's Book and ActiveTeach are used by the large majority of teachers at both institutions (97% of teachers reported using it at least three times a week and 77% used it for more than four hours a week), there is a difference in how MEL and the print workbook are used. At ICPNA Chiclayo, the print workbook seems to be used by most students, as reported in the student survey (62% of students suggested using it at least once a week). In contrast, for ICPNA Cusco, only 2% of students reported using the print version. Resources on English.com and the Top Notch Go audio app also seem to be used by the majority of students, while the classroom audio program is mostly used in one institution. MEL tests and its email function are used by fewer teachers and students.

Table 11 presents an overview of core components used, those used most of the time and those that are less often used by both students and teachers. Some of the components are designed for purely teacher or student use and some are designed for both.

Table 11: Top Notch core and non-core components, student and teacher questionnaires

Core ¹	Mostly used ²	Less used ³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student’s Book: All 37 teachers in the questionnaire reported using it at least three times a week in class. 95% (274/288) of students say they use it. ● MEL: Nearly all students in the questionnaire (98%, 282/288) reported using MEL, and 89% (33/37) of teachers said it was a requirement, although fewer (65%, 24/37) suggested that it was an integral part of their course. The following exercises seemed to be a core part of the course: grammar (required by 94% (34/36) of teachers); vocabulary exercises (by 91%, 32/35); writing exercises (by 89%, 32/36); pronunciation coach videos (by 80%, 28/35); grammar coach videos (by 78%, 28/36), and vocabulary flashcards (71%, 24/34) ● ActiveTeach: 97% (33/34) of teachers reported using it at least three times a week, and 77% (27/35) used it for more than four hours a week. Observation data, particularly from ICPNA Cusco, verifies this. ● Classroom audio on English.com: 85% (244/288) of students suggested they use it, and 54% (19/35) of teachers suggested its use was required. Another 34% (12/35) encouraged it. ● Extra practice activities on English.com: 79% (227/288) of students reported using them; 57% (20/35) of teachers suggested they were a course requirement, and a further 34% (12/35) that they encouraged their use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Top Notch Go audio app: 61% (175/288) of students reported using the app, although only 13% (4/32) of teachers suggested it was required. A further 56% (18/32) encouraged its use. ● MEL: the following were required by most teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ end-of-course tests (54%, 19/35) ○ unit tests (53%, 19/36) ○ playing games (53%, 19/36) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MEL email: only 41% (7/17) of ICPNA Chiclayo teachers suggested they required students to communicate with them via the platform and only one teacher from ICPNA Cusco. A further half of teachers at both institutions encouraged students to use it.
<p>High use in one institution, but not in the other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Print workbook: Despite the data indicating that the print workbook was used by about a third of teachers and students, figures are skewed upwards by one institution. 62% (77/125) of ICPNA Chiclayo’s students suggested that the print workbook was used in their course, with 62% saying it was mandatory, and 44% of teachers suggested they used it weekly. In contrast, only 2% of ICPNA Cusco’s students reported using the print workbook, and 72% of teachers that they used it in less than half of lessons. ● MEL mid-course tests: Of the teachers in the questionnaire, 44% (15/34) required the use of the tests, although this was 68% of teachers from ICPNA Chiclayo. At both institutions, only around one in five teachers suggested they did not encourage students to use it. 		

MEL is compulsory at both institutions. It is seen by the majority of teachers as integral to their teaching and by the majority of students as integral to their learning. Furthermore, its use is integrated into course grading. At ICPNA Chiclayo, MEL assignments/practices count as 25% of a student's final grade. This figure is 5% at the other institution. Teachers at ICPNA Cusco suggested that 5% was too low, and they wanted this to be reviewed. Interviewees at one institution suggested that, if students were obliged to use MEL at the institution for a set time each month and were assigned tasks to develop all skills, the profile of MEL would be enhanced across the institution.

Importantly, students suggested that using MEL more within lessons would further improve their English (78%, 201/257). Continually making connections between the content of the Student's Book and MEL tasks in the classroom was also seen as beneficial by teachers. On the whole, MEL assignments/practices were assigned as homework, while the use of MEL tests was not widespread. At ICPNA Chiclayo, a few teachers used MEL tests, but the majority of teachers cited an issue with too few rooms available for students to take the tests at the same time. The assignment completion dates varied. Some teachers assigned fewer practices to students, expecting them to be completed in a short timeframe such as seven days, while others left them open for the whole month. Usually, the bulk of the assignments/practices were assigned in the platform for convenience, and the actual number to be completed was verbally communicated to students in the classroom.

Regarding time spent on assignments/practices in MEL, survey results and data from the MEL platform were in relative agreement. On average, the majority of students seemed to spend between 30 minutes to an hour a week on assignments/practices in MEL. In the survey, nearly half the respondents reported spending 30 minutes a week and one-third reported spending an hour. The MEL data for the classes and for one-month courses suggested that, on average, students spent about 70 minutes a week on assignments/practices in MEL, although evidence showed that students from one institution spent more time on tasks. There was also significant variation in the average number of hours spent by students per class, which needs further investigation.

Assessment

An unlimited number of attempts is usually allowed by teachers, although one teacher took the first attempt as the most accurate when judging student performance. The majority of students and teachers agreed that an unlimited number of attempts was useful to learning, probably because of the clear role that MEL assignments/practices play in the learning model, which is about continual and sustained practice to master content. This is also in line with what counts towards student performance when it comes to MEL assignments/practices. At both institutions, performance on MEL assignments/practices did not seem to be the focus. According to one teacher, it was effort that was assessed, measured in terms of the quantity of assignments/practices completed, and the students' resilience, measured by the number of attempts they made.

Monitoring and feedback

An important feature of Top Notch is that students and teachers are able to use the gradebook's monitoring function. Do teachers regularly check performance on MEL and talk to students about it? Are students required to track their own progress? At ICPNA Chiclayo, the majority of teachers reported that they checked the gradebook once or several times a week. 84% reported that their students were required to track their own progress, and 47% of teachers checked the gradebook at least once a week. At ICPNA Cusco, the majority of teachers checked the gradebook between once a day and three to five days a week. 65% of teachers required their students to check their own progress, and 57% of students reported that they checked their progress at least once a week. Overall, teachers at both institutions suggested that they monitored student completion rates on MEL often, every three to 18 days at ICPNA Chiclayo, which is the end of a learning cycle, and usually every week at ICPNA Cusco. Feedback to students concentrated on the quantity of assignments/practices they completed in class, as a group or at an individual level. A summary of inputs and practices is provided in Appendix C.

Student performance on MEL

Finding 6: There are indications that teachers can use student scores from assignments and tests in MEL confidently for formative assessment purposes. Further investigation to verify this finding, however, would be helpful.

Given that the percentage of MEL tasks completed using one attempt ranged from 40% to 55%, except for one level, and, in the remaining cases, two attempts were mostly used. This suggests that, in the majority of cases, teachers could consider student scores as reflective of their actual performance¹⁰. Moreover, assignments and practices were relatively reliable indicators of student performance, as there are indications that the average performance of students on assignments/practices in one unit could be used as an indication of their future performance in another unit.

The correlations for ICPNA Chiclayo mainly ranged between 0.31 (1st quartile) and 0.66 (3rd quartile), with a mean of 0.49 (41/69 correlations, a percentage of about 60%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level). The correlations for practices, for ICPNA Cusco, mainly ranged between 0.10 (1st quartile) and 0.36 (3rd quartile), with a mean of 0.29 (7/13 correlations, a percentage of 54%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level). For the assignments, for ICPNA Cusco, the correlations ranged from 0.34 (1st quartile) to 0.61 (3rd quartile) with a mean of 0.43 (14 /20 correlations, a percentage of 70%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level).

¹⁰ Students have the opportunity to see the answer to a question after their third attempt.

Finding 7: The more assignments and practices students complete, the better their scores, data suggests. Students also benefit from attempting the same task more than once, as practice helps them improve. Understanding the factors influencing the variability between the average improvement of classes would be helpful.

There is evidence that students should be encouraged to complete MEL assignments/practices for learning purposes. In five out of six cases, a positive and statistically significant correlation was found between the percentage assignment/practices completed and the average score. For both institutions, coefficients ranged between 0.23 to 0.57, and five of the six were statistically significant at the 0.01 level¹¹.

Progress from students' first to highest attempt is also noteworthy¹². At ICPNA Chiclayo, improvements ranged from 26 to 43 percentage points for the three levels (Fundamentals, Level 2 and Level 3). There was a significant variability between the average improvement of classes. The average improvement ranged between 18 and 29 percentage points (six classes) for Fundamentals level and between 24 and 49 percentage points (seven classes) for Level 2. At ICPNA Cusco, improvements ranged between 32 and 34 percentage points and is very similar between assignments and practices. There was significant variation between the average improvement per class, ranging from 31 to 40 points per class (nine classes) for Level 1 practices, between 29 and 34 points per class (eight classes) for Fundamentals assignments and between 29 and 40 points (nine classes) for Fundamentals practices.

¹¹ Completions did not include repeated attempts on the same assignment/practice.

¹² As noted earlier in this report, this is nearly indistinguishable from the last attempt.

Perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on students

Finding 8: Overall, Top Notch is accessible, data suggests. In the majority of access related questions, more than 76% of students and teachers found the Student’s Book, ActiveTeach and MEL accessible.

Both student and teacher responses to the questionnaires and student focus group data indicated that Top Notch was accessible. Between 95% and 100% of students and teachers suggested that Top Notch was up-to-date, interesting, relevant to real life and at the appropriate level. Furthermore, 92% (252/275) of students and 84% (31/37) of teachers indicated that the Top Notch content was culturally relevant. Interviewees also highlighted how easy it was to navigate the Student’s Book. During the observations, minimal guidance was given on how to use the materials and no navigation issues were raised. 87% (241/276) and 69% (182/263) of students agreed/strongly agreed that the English.com website and Top Notch Go audio app were easy to access.

ActiveTeach was also considered accessible. 97% (36/37) of teachers in the questionnaire found it easy to access and 89% (32/36) found it easy to download its content. Observations also showed that teachers and students used ActiveTeach with ease. Both focus group and questionnaire data suggested that the large majority of students agreed that MEL is accessible too. For example, 86% (246/285) of students reported having accessed their account on the computer or laptop easily and 76% (211/279) reported having accessed their account on their smartphones easily. Additionally, 87% (245/281) found it easy to navigate, and 84% (237/281) accessed their assignments easily. In interviews and on the questionnaire, teachers agreed that MEL was accessible. In the survey, more than 90% of teachers reported that they could easily access their account via their computer or laptop (37/37) and smartphone (91%, 32/35), and that it was easy to navigate the content in MEL (92%, 34/37) and to set assignments (92%, 33/36).

Finding 9: Top Notch supports the development of positive learning behaviors. The majority of students suggested that their confidence, enjoyment and motivation to learn English had increased since using Top Notch. Students also pointed to increased confidence in their speaking, reading, listening and writing skills. The use of MEL in particular also encouraged the development of students’ independent self-assessment and self-monitoring skills, according to the data.

The overwhelming majority of students (96%, 269/279) reported that, since using Top Notch, their confidence in learning English had increased, as had their confidence in reading (97%, 268/277), listening (96%, 263/273) and writing (93%, 255/273). The large majority of teachers in the questionnaire agreed. Between 86% and 100% of students and teachers also suggested that Top Notch had significantly/very significantly increased confidence in each of the above skills. Although 62% (178/285) of students agreed/strongly agreed that their confidence had increased in speaking English since using Top Notch, the result was skewed downwards by one institution, where

just 22% (27/124) of students agreed/strongly agreed that their confidence had increased, leaving 78% (97/124) to disagree/strongly disagree. At ICPNA Cusco, 94% (151/161) of students suggested that their confidence in speaking had increased since using Top Notch. 89% (32/36) of teachers reported that Top Notch supported their goal of increasing their students' confidence in speaking English.

Teachers suggested that MEL was seen as a key component in supporting students' confidence because it built a sense of achievement and progress. For example, feeling well prepared for class because they had completed MEL tasks, and being able to make mistakes and repeat assignments/practices in their own space and time, without peer judgement, were seen to have a positive impact on confidence.

As regards motivation, Top Notch significantly/very significantly improved the motivation to learn English, according to 94% (261/279) of students and 35 out of 36 teachers, who suggested that it significantly/very significantly helped them to motivate students. Student and teacher feedback pointed to MEL in particular as motivating, and its games, videos, interactive exercises, and the immediacy of feedback on performance, as motivating.

Additionally, 96% (266/278) of students reported that they enjoyed learning English, and nearly all teachers in the survey (36/37) suggested that it was useful/very useful in supporting students' enjoyment of learning English.

Data suggested that students' independence, self-assessment, and self-monitoring skills were also fostered, particularly through MEL. Teachers indicated that students had to take more responsibility for their learning because, by default, they were responsible for meeting deadlines for their assignments, they had to make decisions about the quantity of assignments they would complete, and they had to consider the impact such decisions would have on their scores. Self-monitoring and self-assessment were encouraged through the grade summaries and the immediacy of feedback, as well as through the use of the gradebook. In the questionnaire, 74% (207/279) of students reported using the MEL gradebook at least monthly (and more than half used it at least weekly).

Finding 10: Top Notch is engaging, data suggests. In particular, the relevance of the Student's Book, ActiveTeach's interactivity and MEL's usefulness were cited. Adapting materials to better suit the interests of children and young adults and further develop MEL to allow for real-time interactions and live streaming would all be welcomed.

The large majority of students (95%, 263/277) indicated that Top Notch had significantly/very significantly helped them engage with learning English. Student engagement was also evident during the observations. The majority of students in the four classes observed were, overall, on task, contributing their thoughts, asking questions and generally being active participants in the lessons. Furthermore, students' NPS score is +21.5, suggesting that they are likely to recommend Top Notch to others and that they are relatively satisfied with it.

The Student's Book and ActiveTeach were seen to be engaging to students, as was MEL. The opportunities for discussion in the Student's Book and, overall, its ability to meet well the needs of all students in terms of age, time of study and ability, were seen as highly appealing. However, additional topics that could better serve the needs of children and young adults would be welcomed. For example, teachers suggested that topics such as credit cards and hiring a car were less relevant to the large numbers of children and young people¹³. Further cultural and local adaptations were also important to the institutions. Teachers pointed out that topics could be more relevant to Peru and closer to the interests and aspirations of students, especially related to their immediate context and jobs in the area. Although adaptations for young adults is a viable way forward, Top Notch is designed and developed specifically for adult audiences, thus adapting materials to adult audience might not be in scope.

Regarding ActiveTeach, students in the focus groups noted that both they and their teachers appeared to be more actively involved in learning since using it, due to its interactivity. They referred to ActiveTeach as fun, pointing to the variety of activities included, its games, crosswords, videos and listening clips as the most engaging.

In interview, students and teachers were overwhelmingly positive about how engaging MEL was. Similarly, in the questionnaire, the majority of students suggested that MEL was engaging (91%, 241/265) and that they enjoyed learning by completing assignments on it (87%, 229/264). Furthermore, between 87% and 93% of students in the questionnaire thought that there was a good variety of practices and tests and highlighted as useful/very useful the fact that they could check their answers immediately, access MEL at any time and place they wanted, and see a summary of their grade and progress and the completion dates for their assignments.

¹³ At the institutions visited, Top Notch is used with a range of ages including children from age nine and above

In the focus groups, students struggled to offer any suggestions for improvement when it came to MEL. When pressed, they mentioned their desire for more culturally relevant exercises and suggested that MEL could be further develop so that it allowed for real-time interactions and live-streaming.

In contrast to both the questionnaire and the focus group results, the students' NPS score for MEL was negative at -50.4 . This result is highly questionable when compared to the results from other sources collected and needs to be investigated further.

In the case of Peru, assignment/practice completion rates cannot be used as a proxy of engagement. This is because, at times, the sample sizes were small and because the implementation model used at both institutions is such that, as the platform is currently set, we are unable to control for a number of teaching practices, including:

- when teachers assigned all assignments/practices per unit, but verbally communicated to students the required number to complete from the whole
- which assignments/practices were completed because teachers had assigned them to students and which were completed by students on their own accord
- when MEL and the print workbook were used concurrently, which meant that the number of completions of assignments/practices was most probably higher in reality than that recorded in MEL.

The above, amongst others, are valuable insights for future research and improvements that could be made to the platform to control for different implementation practice, which if and when possible, would help in more reliably understanding usage and teaching and learning habits.

Finding 11: The large majority of students suggested that Top Notch supports them in improving their English in general and in improving, their speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar and writing skills.

The large majority of students indicated that Top Notch had significantly/very significantly supported them in improving their English (89%, 247/278) and their skills in speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar and writing (as reported in the questionnaire by between 93% and 95% of students). According to teachers, the close alignment between the different Top Notch components, especially MEL and the Student's Book, was seen to be key to supporting student achievement. The conversation topics in each lesson, which allow students to immediately apply the skills learnt in that lesson, were also cited (for example, the vocabulary and grammar learnt in lesson 5 can also be applied during lesson 5.). Teachers asked for more materials for reading because they felt that students needed more practice in this skill.

With regard to MEL in particular, and across the data sources, students and teachers agreed that it supported the development of all English language skills:

- 95% (248/260) of students agreed/strongly agreed that MEL helped them understand the content learned in class, and 80% (213/266) reported that the feedback they got from MEL helped them understand how to improve their English as it complemented teachers' explanations in class.
- Between 91% and 93% of students pointed to the grammar, writing and vocabulary exercises as well as to the vocabulary flashcards and the pronunciation coach videos as useful/very useful in supporting learning. A further 82% (207/253) found the concentration games or quizzes useful/very useful. Students in the focus groups also appreciated the range of resources and pointed to their usefulness in supporting learning.
- 91% (234/257) of students found repeating exercises, the grade summaries and the ability to check answers immediately useful/very useful.

Suggestions for further support for the development of English skills related to MEL included reviewing the auto-scoring system so that students were not penalized for what they saw as minor mistakes in punctuation or spelling, and supporting the assessment of pronunciation better through MEL.

It would be useful to have further data on student performance. This is because, amongst other reasons, MEL assignments/practices comprise one piece of a wider assessment system; students also take other formative and summative assessments but we only had access to their MEL scores. It is important that we cross reference student scores from MEL with more standardized assessments as well as have a more detailed insight into the conditions under which students completing these MEL exercises. Overall, students' average performance in MEL assignments/practices at both institutions is relatively high. This is around 94% for ICPNA Chiclayo, with no major discrepancies between the mean scores of students of different levels; the average practices class performance ranges between 83%-99% for Fundamentals level (seven classes) and between 93%-96% for Level 2 (seven classes). The overall average practice score for ICPNA Cusco is around 93%; the average class performance ranges between 88%-98% for Fundamentals (nine classes) and between 76%-95% for Level 1 (nine classes).

Finding 12: Top Notch prepares students well for their next stage in their English studies and to achieve their goal, data suggests.

96% (262/273) of students in the questionnaire reported that Top Notch prepared them well for the next level of their English studies, with 97% (264/273) saying it had significantly/very significantly done so. 96% of students (261/271) also reported that Top Notch helped them to achieve their goal, with 95% (261/275) saying that it did so significantly/very significantly. In addition, the majority of teachers in the questionnaire suggested that Top Notch was useful/very useful in helping them to support

student progress according to their age and level (97%, 35/36) and aptitude (97%, 35/36), as well as in passing high stakes external exams (83%, 29/35).

Perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on teachers and institutions

Finding 13: Evidence suggested that Top Notch increases confidence in teaching English and supports teaching through an array of useful resources. Evidence also showed that Top Notch supports effective lesson planning and reduces teachers' lesson preparation time and assessment and administrative workload. Although, overall, monitoring of student performance is helpful, drilling down to individual student data is challenging.

In the interviews, teachers were overwhelmingly positive about Top Notch and enthusiastic about using what they perceived to be high-quality materials that supported learning. Based on their questionnaire responses, they also seemed highly likely to recommend Top Notch and MEL to a colleague (teachers' NPS score for Top Notch was +78 and for MEL +80) In more detail, teachers suggested that Top Notch:

- **Increased their confidence in teaching English:** Significantly/very significantly (91%, 32/35 of teachers in the questionnaire).
- **Increased confidence in teaching English of teachers new to the teaching profession** (94%, 33/35).
- **Supported effective lesson planning** (91%, 32/35) and **reduced lesson preparation time** (92%, 33/36): Referring to ActiveTeach in particular, 94% (33/35) of teachers reported using it to prepare for classes. The fact that lesson plans, the book's content and an interactive bank of activities are instantly available through ActiveTeach was seen as a key factor in saving lesson preparation time. Furthermore, the lesson planner, oral progress charts, printable extension activities and methodology section were deemed useful/very useful by between 86% and 89% of teachers.
- **Supported teaching in different ways:** According to teachers in the questionnaire, Top Notch significantly/very significantly helped them understand the pedagogy to be used (89%, 32/36); to differentiate teaching in mixed ability classes (91%, 32/35); to fill in classroom hours with work-related activities (86%, 31/36), and to engage students with interesting content (100%, 35/35). Additionally, 97% (35/36) of teachers indicated that being able to display all the different ActiveTeach activities had improved the quality of their lessons, and 97% (33/34)

agreed/strongly agreed that all the interactive whiteboard tools on ActiveTeach were useful. Moreover, between 94% and 100% of teachers found the Top Notch TV, games, audio and video transcripts and flash card player useful/very useful to their teaching, and 81% (29/36) found the pop songs useful.

As for MEL, teachers suggested that it provided an array of different tools that were not otherwise available. For example, teachers were able to check how long students spent on activities, how many attempts they took on assignments and whether they met their deadlines. These tools allowed for a deeper understanding of student performance, the provision of more specific feedback and the assignment of additional practices based on common errors identified.

- **Supported assessment and reduced assessment workload:** Significantly/very significantly by assessing student performance effectively (92% of teachers in the questionnaire report, 33/36) and by using an automated grading system (94%, 33/35), which interviewees said saved them time alongside the easy assigning of homework in MEL. For 86% (30/35) of teachers, the unit, mid-term and final review tests in MEL were useful/very useful, with teacher interview data suggesting that teachers used them to create their own assessments.

However, although teachers were in agreement that MEL supported them in monitoring student progress, they suggested that drilling down to individual student data was time-consuming. As a possible solution to this problem, they proposed developing an auto-alert system to identify students who were underperforming. They also suggested that, given the short duration of the courses, re-registering students and changing course IDs in MEL was burdensome.

Finding 14: Teachers said Top Notch’s impact on the institution was positive. The majority reported that it supported improvements and consistency in teaching across the department, it had increased conversations about teaching and it had encouraged further collaboration between teachers.

Top Notch with MEL supports improvements in teaching across the institution, data suggests. According to interviews and the teacher questionnaire, Top Notch significantly/very significantly had an impact on English departments in that:

- **It supported improvements in teaching:** Reported by 97% (34/35) teachers in the questionnaire)
- **It encouraged consistency in teaching:** Reported by 97% (34/35) of teachers in the questionnaire. In particular, one co-ordinator noted that ActiveTeach supported standardization as teachers could not select whatever they wanted.



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- **It increased conversations about teaching English:** 89% (31/35) of teachers. This was particularly evident at ICPNA Cusco, which had recently begun implementing MEL and where reflection in action was observed.
- **It encouraged further collaboration between teachers:** 86% (30/35) of teachers in the questionnaire suggested.



Recommendations

Recommendations deriving from this report will be provided to the relevant Pearson teams and to the institutions directly.

Generalizability of findings, limitations and future research

This section outlines the key limitations of the research and potential areas for future research:

- Findings are based on specific implementation models carried out with specific samples of students and teachers in specific cultural contexts and settings, and are not necessarily representative of the whole population studying or teaching at the institutions. For this reason, findings cannot be generalized to all students and teachers using Top Notch. Findings may generalize to similar samples, exposed to similar types of implementation in similar contexts. Further research should aim to achieve a representative sample of students and teachers across institutions, and both replicate findings as well as expand the repertoire of implementation models so that implementation using Top Notch is better understood in different contexts, settings and countries.
- Findings are based on triangulating inferences across different evidence sources. The aim is to allow Pearson to use the data to screen major occurrences and major trends across institutions for decision making and developing an understanding of the different implementation models (Ewell, 2009; McCormick & McClenney, 2012; Pike, 2013), not to provide precise answers. Furthermore, self-report methods are known to be vulnerable to both unreliability and bias. Self-reported perceptions of impact on achievement and progression do not provide objective evidence of impact. This is more of a limitation for evidencing student achievement and progression than for student access and experience, where self-reported perceptions are extremely valuable. Further research should seek to incorporate objective external measures of achievement and progression, to compare outcomes for users and non-users and to control for potentially confounding factors such as prior achievement. Additionally, individual student level analysis will allow us to understand the relationship between student usage and performance. Moreover, we were unable to control for prior achievement for all samples in the study. Addition of an indicator for socioeconomic status as a covariate would also strengthen the study.
- At times, data from the student focus groups and from the interviews are presented from the students' perspective only, or from the teachers' perspective only. At times these findings are corroborated by the students' and/or teachers' questionnaires. When findings from the student focus groups and from the teacher interviews do not tally, or with either the student

questionnaire or the teacher questionnaire data, they should be treated with caution and become items for follow-up questioning in future research.

- Due to time constraints, analysis that allowed the ‘bundling’ of answers referring to the same category, i.e. usefulness of MEL or student confidence, to derive a standardized index was not performed. This type of analysis will provide a more reliable estimate of the construct and will also allow for ‘comparisons’ across different institutions and countries. Future research could complete further analysis by looking at different variables in the student and teacher questionnaires, i.e. student motivation to learn, or teacher confidence in teaching English and usage. Lastly, responses to open-ended questions in the student and teacher questionnaires were not analyzed. Analyzing these would further enrich our understanding of the themes explored in this study.
- Variation between and within classrooms needs further investigation.
- Students’ NPS scores with regards to MEL contradicts results from the data collected across the different research instruments. Further research should aim to investigate qualitatively the reliability of the scale used.
- A more rigorous design would compare the performance of students using Top Notch to students not using Top Notch, and students would either be randomly assigned to treatment condition or would be matched to students in the other group on important background characteristics, such as prior achievement and demographic factors.
- Future research should aim to either control for implementation or understand implementation first before analyzing MEL data.

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Appendix A: Consolidated Framework of Implementation Research (CFIR) devised in 2009

Table A1: Consolidated Framework of Implementation Research (CFIR), devised in 2009

Construct		Short description
I. Intervention characteristics		
A	Intervention source	Perception of key stakeholders about whether the intervention is externally or internally developed
B	Evidence strength and quality	Stakeholder perceptions of the quality and validity of evidence supporting the belief that the intervention will have desired outcomes
C	Relative advantage	Stakeholder perception of the advantage of implementing the intervention versus an alternative solution
D	Adaptability	The degree to which an intervention can be adapted, tailored, refined or reinvented to meet local needs
E	Trialability	The ability to test the intervention on a small scale in the organization and to be able to reverse course (undo implementation) if warranted
F	Complexity	Perceived difficulty of implementation, reflected by duration, scope, radicalness, disruptiveness, centrality and intricacy and number of steps required to implement
G	Design quality and packaging	Perceived excellence in how the intervention is bundled, presented and assembled
H	Cost	Costs of the intervention and costs associated with implementing the intervention including investment, supply and opportunity costs
II. Outer setting		
A	Individual needs and resources	The extent to which individual needs, as well as barriers and facilitators to meet those needs, are accurately known and prioritised by the organization
B	Cosmopolitanism	The degree to which an organization is networked with other external organizations
C	Peer pressure	Mimetic or competitive pressure to implement an intervention, typically because most or other key peer or competing organizations have already implemented or are in a bid for a competitive edge
D	External policy and incentives	A broad construct that includes external strategies to spread interventions, including policy and regulations (governmental or other central entity), external mandates, recommendations and guidelines, pay-for-performance, collaboratives and public or benchmark reporting
III. Inner setting		
A	Structural characteristics	The social architecture, age, maturity and size of an organization
B	Networks and communications	The nature and quality of webs of social networks and the nature and quality of formal and informal communications within an organization

Construct		Short description
C	Culture	Norms, values and basic assumptions of a given organization
D	Implementation climate	The absorptive capacity for change, shared receptivity of involved individuals to an intervention and the extent to which use of that intervention will be rewarded, supported and expected within their organization
1	Tension for change	The degree to which stakeholders perceive the current situation as intolerable or needing change
2	Compatibility	The degree of tangible fit between meaning and values attached to the intervention by involved individuals, how those align with individuals' own norms, values and perceived risks and needs, and how the intervention fits with existing workflows and systems
3	Relative priority	Individuals' shared perception of the importance of the implementation within the organization
4	Organizational incentives and rewards	Extrinsic incentives such as goal-sharing awards, performance reviews, promotions and rises in salary and less tangible incentives such as increased stature or respect
5	Goals and feedback	The degree to which goals are clearly communicated, acted upon and fed back to staff, and alignment of that feedback with goals
6	Learning climate	A climate in which (a) leaders express their own fallibility and need for team members' assistance and input; (b) team members feel that they are essential, valued and knowledgeable partners in the change process; (c) individuals feel psychologically safe to try new methods, and (d) there is sufficient time and space for reflective thinking and evaluation
E	Readiness for implementation	Tangible and immediate indicators of organizational commitment to its decision to implement an intervention
1	Leadership engagement	Commitment, involvement and accountability of leaders and managers with the implementation
2	Available resources	The level of resources dedicated for implementation and ongoing operations, including money, training, education, physical space and time
3	Access to knowledge and information	Ease of access to digestible information and knowledge about the intervention and how to incorporate it into work tasks
IV. Characteristics of individuals		
A	Knowledge and beliefs about the intervention	Individual attitudes toward and value placed on the intervention as well as familiarity with facts, truths and principles related to the intervention
B	Self-efficacy	Individual belief in their own capabilities to execute courses of action to achieve implementation goals
C	Individual stage of change	Characterization of the phase an individual is in as they progress toward skilled, enthusiastic and sustained use of the intervention
D	Individual identification with organization	A broad construct related to how individuals perceive the organization and their relationship and degree of commitment with that organization
E	Other personal attributes	A broad construct to include other personal traits such as tolerance of ambiguity, intellectual ability, motivation, values, competence, capacity and learning style
V. Process		



Construct		Short description
A	Planning	The degree to which a scheme or method of behavior and tasks for implementing an intervention are developed in advance, and the quality of those schemes or methods
B	Engaging	Attracting and involving appropriate individuals in the implementation and use of the intervention through a combined strategy of social marketing, education, role modelling, training and other similar activities
1	Opinion leaders	Individuals in an organization who have formal or informal influence on the attitudes and beliefs of their colleagues with respect to implementing the intervention
2	Formally appointed internal implementation leaders	Individuals from within the organization who have been formally appointed with responsibility for implementing an intervention as co-ordinator, project manager, team leader or another similar role
3	Champions	Individuals who dedicate themselves to supporting, marketing, overcoming indifference or resistance that the intervention may provoke in an organization
4	External change agents	Individuals who are affiliated with an outside entity who formally influence or facilitate intervention decisions in a desirable direction
C	Executing	Carrying out or accomplishing the implementation according to plan
D	Reflecting and evaluating	Quantitative and qualitative feedback about the progress and quality of implementation accompanied with regular personal and team debriefing about progress and experience

Appendix B: Full results

This section provides the results from the analysis of the data collected for this study, including from the student and teacher questionnaires, the co-ordinators' pre-questionnaires, student focus groups, teacher interviews, classroom observations and MEL student data.

Data collected and analyzed are from the only two institutions in Peru which used the most up-to-date version of Top Notch with MEL and ActiveTeach at the time of the research. (The total number of institutions and sites using Top Notch in Peru at the time was four and 11 respectively.) Data from student and teacher questionnaires, student focus groups and teacher interviews, and from MEL were collected from students and teachers studying and working at the institutions' main site. Although these data might represent the views and online behaviors of students and teachers of the main sites, arguably, one could assume that implementation data could overall represent practices across all the six sites, given that the same model within the ICPNA Chiclayo and its three branches and ICPNA Cusco and its one branch is meant to be followed.

As regards findings from the surveys, the perspective is mainly that of students at Fundamentals and Level 1 and students who attended relatively short courses of one to five months. Students in the focus groups were studying across levels. Teachers perspective from the survey and interviews, in the main, derive from those teaching across the Top Notch levels, whilst all 37 teachers who responded to the survey are found to teach in Fundamentals and/or Level 1. The views are also of teachers who are relatively experienced overall in teaching English but relatively new to teaching with Top Notch; the majority has been teaching English for more than three years and have been teaching with Top Notch for up to two years. The majority of less experienced teachers is found in ICPNA Cusco whilst the majority of ICPNA Chiclayo's teachers have been teaching with Top Notch for more than two years. MEL data analysis includes students from Fundamentals to Level 3.

When findings are not presented for an institution, this is because no noteworthy differences were identified between them.

Findings are presented thematically, and refer to:

- Students attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL;
- Teachers attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL;
- Implementation of Top Notch with MEL, including the reasons for engaging with Top Notch with MEL, institutions' readiness for implementation, the teaching and learning and assessment approach implemented, especially relating to MEL and the training and support for teachers and students;



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- Student and teacher usage of MEL;
- Learnings for teaching and learning from the MEL data; and
- Student and teacher perceptions of the impact of Top Notch with MEL on students, teachers, teaching and the institution.

Student attitudes to Top Notch and MEL

Students prefer and enjoy Top Notch with MEL to other instructional approaches and prefer using MEL to the printed workbook, data suggests. In the survey, we find:

- 91% (242/267) of students reported that they were more engaged in classes using Top Notch than other classes without MEL.
- 90% (234/261) of students reported that they liked the combination of teacher instruction and independent MEL practice to learn English.
- 86% (227/265) of students reported that they were more motivated by classes using Top Notch than other classes without the package.
- 85% (220/258) of students enjoyed the classes using Top Notch more than other classes without it.
- 68% (176/258) of students reported that they would rather complete exercises in MEL than in the print workbook.
- 78% (201/257) of students agreed/strongly agreed that their English would improve further if they were to use MEL more in class.

In the focus groups, students were highly enthusiastic about Top Notch and the advantages of using MEL. In one of ICPNA Cusco's focus groups, when students were asked to shout, on the count of three, either 'MEL' or 'Print', based on their preference, with one voice they enthusiastically shouted 'MEL'. The sentiment was similar across focus groups, where MEL was noted to be dynamic and motivating for students. When asked if they would choose to use MEL even if its use wasn't compulsory, they replied yes.

Both students and teachers suggested that using MEL and ActiveTeach feels familiar to students, because technology is part of their everyday lives. Students also thought that using MEL and ActiveTeach was forward-thinking and innovative. They also seemed to feel proud to be part of something that was perceived to be 'unique' to their institution.

The platforms' interactivity was particularly appealing, with students noting that it is fun and motivated them to carry on and do more, and suggesting that MEL tasks helped them improve.

Teacher attitudes towards Top Notch and MEL

Teachers at both institutions, and at ICPNA Cusco in particular, were overwhelmingly positive about using ActiveTeach. They praised the way in which it engaged students through its variety of activities and also liked working interactively with the varied multimedia materials such as videos, audio recordings, transcripts and images. Furthermore, using these resources in the interactive whiteboard meant a reduction in workload due to less photocopying. Students in one focus group also noted how the use of ActiveTeach had made their teachers seem more enthused. During the observations, it was evident that teachers were brimming with enthusiasm during the lessons and felt at ease using the technology.

The teachers interviewed were also positive about MEL, with many noting how it has supported their assessment and monitoring of students in numerous ways. It has also freed up time from looking for exercises online to assign as homework, and from marking and giving feedback. One interviewee noted that colleagues were now able to spend far more time on teaching and learning, and other teachers noted that it freed up their own time at home. Teachers noted that they liked how easy it was to find all the lessons and activities related to one topic or unit, and found MEL more meaningful than the paper workbook. One teacher responded that students listened and wrote more and paid more attention when using MEL.

Questionnaire results align with the teacher interview data and point to teachers at both institutions embracing technology in their teaching. ActiveTeach is used more or less daily, especially at ICPNA Cusco, and MEL at least once a week in class according to 97% (33/34) of teachers. Students also think that their teachers are in favor of using MEL (74%, 190/256) and that they have made it an integral part of teaching and learning (92%, 244/264). Interestingly, MEL is also used in class or in the computer lab. The majority of teachers (66%, 21/32) who answered the question about how long they use MEL in class, indicated that the use of MEL is required in class or in the computer lab for at least an hour a week.

Implementation of Top Notch with MEL

Both institutions are American binationals, offering courses using Top Notch with MEL in all of their classes. Courses are broken into one-month cycles to support affordability and access to learning for students from all backgrounds.

ICPNA Chiclayo

ICPNA Chiclayo is an American binational at the north coast of Peru, serving about 4,500 students. It transitioned to Top Notch's 3rd edition in April 2017, nearly four months before our visit. It has been using MEL for more than three years.

ICPNA Chiclayo's student population consists of about 70% teenagers from local high schools and 30% professionals who wish to improve their English for work. Both student groups have limited time to study English due to other commitments. The majority of teachers have been teaching in the Binational for a long time, and new and young teachers are also present. Teachers are also local to the area or to the region.

Teacher and student relationships, as observed with the teenager groups, were positive. Despite the large number of students and teachers at the institution, a strong community spirit was evident. Teachers spoke fondly of their students. They discussed students' background and personal circumstances in relative detail, how these factors influence their learning and how they and other teachers were trying to support them.

Reasons for implementing Top Notch with MEL

The key reasons for using Top Notch with MEL at ICPNA Chiclayo were:

- the director's commitment and interest in technology and their belief that it is the future when it comes to learning;
- the idea that innovation through technology can set the institution apart, positioning it as a leader in the field;
- the recognition of the benefits of MEL to teaching and learning for students and teachers.

Readiness for implementation

ICPNA Chiclayo has a long history of innovating using technology. Its leadership, particularly one of the members of its board of directors, is passionate about technology, considers it an integral part of learning and has been instrumental in introducing and encouraging its use.

When the decision was made to implement MEL, teachers, parents and students raised concerns about the lack of the necessary infrastructure. This led to the creation of two computer labs, with 41 computers. iPads could also be hired through the computer lab for use in classrooms. (Their use, however, is limited, given that Wi-Fi is not yet available in all classrooms.)

The above investments and students' positive interactions with MEL, which highlighted the benefits it can have to their learning, cemented the institutional commitment to MEL in parents' eyes and paved the way to a 'new attitude'. Now parents themselves have started investing in computers, smartphones and tablets to encourage their children to use MEL.

Components used

Quantitative data and data from the focus groups and interviews show that ICPNA Chiclayo teachers and students make good use of most of the Top Notch components.

Key components

- **The Student's Book:** 97% (121/125) of students report that it's use is mandatory; and all teachers in the questionnaire use it at least three times a week for more than 4 hours.
- **ActiveTeach:** is used at least three times a week by all teachers who answered this question
- **MEL:** 78% (94/120) of students say it is mandatory. It is required by 80% (16/20) teachers although 60% of students suggest that their teacher makes it an integral to their course).
- **Classroom audio programme:** 86% (108/125) of students say it is mandatory; and 67% (12/18) of teachers required it.

Non-core components, although used relatively frequently

- **Extra practice activities on English.com:** 68% (75/111) of students report it is mandatory; 67% (12/18) of teachers required them.
- **Print workbook:** 62% of students, (77/125) say that it is used at least once a week by 44% (7/16) of teachers who answered the question; 17 teachers indicate they used it sometimes.
- **Top Notch Go Audio app:** 50% (53/105) of students say it is mandatory.

Course structure

ICPNA Chiclayo offers regular and intensive courses, which take place from early morning to late evening (from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.). New classes are formed every month. Details of the duration of courses, number of contact hours and units covered during the 18-day teaching cycle, called the 'month', are provided in the table below.

Table B1: ICPNA Chiclayo's Top Notch with MEL course structure, interviews

ICPNA Chiclayo course structure*	Regular	Intensive
Length of course	5 months	2.5 months
Number of contact hours	1.5 hours a day, 7.5 hours a week	2 hours a day, 10 hours a week
Teaching cycle and units covered	18 teaching days in one month, typically covering three units in Fundamentals and two or three units in all levels	18 teaching days in one month, typically covering six units in Fundamentals and four or five units in all other levels

Class sizes vary significantly depending on the time of the day; evening classes are more popular. For example, a class in Fundamentals could have 10 students in the morning and between 16 and 26 students in the evening. Extramural classes can be even bigger.

Teaching and learning

Teachers follow the Top Notch units as outlined in the book and occasionally use supplementary materials. In small classes, students are mostly called or volunteer to complete a task on the interactive whiteboard if ActiveTeach is used, or respond to tasks using the students' book. Teacher responses to the questionnaire suggest that the following practices take place in the classrooms:

- **Learning new content:** Teacher demonstrations and explanations
- **Practice:** Students practice in the students' book in most of the lessons. 90% of teachers report administering a test or quiz using ActiveTeach to assess student learning in half of the lessons, and 84% do so using MEL in three-quarters of the lessons. Less frequently, teachers administer their own developed assessments in the lesson (63% in at least half of lessons).
- **Study skills:** Most lessons support students in learning to use language resources provided by Top Notch.
- **Teaching approach to practice/production:** Pair work seems to be the most used way in most lessons, while whole-class discussions are also relatively common. Small group work comes next, with 50% of teachers reporting using it in almost every lesson. Individual work features in fewer lessons.
- **Assessing homework:** Teachers in the questionnaire suggest that in the majority of classes they mainly assess students' homework completed in the students' book with them (90% of teachers report to do this in half of lessons or more). There is a spread in teacher practice as regards the frequency in the use of MEL and of the print workbook, data suggest. Overall, 84% of teachers suggest that MEL is used to review student's homework completed by in at least half of lessons with students, while 69% do so using the print workbook in at least half of lessons. Thus, some teachers might be using MEL only or the print workbook only and some (probably the majority) might be using both.

Students speak in English during the lessons. Observations reveal that Spanish is used only when absolutely necessary. Observations also show that students' speech is used mainly when students had to respond to practice activities. Students were engaged at all times during the lessons and were willing to ask questions, in both classes observed. In the grammar class, ActiveTeach was used solely. In the vocabulary/reading class, a relative mix of print and digital resources was used. In one class, the activities were mainly completed as a whole class. In the other one, individual, whole class and pairs activities were used. The use and navigation of ActiveTeach of other materials used was unproblematic. Both teachers and students seem to use the materials with ease and students seemed enthusiastic about using the whiteboard to complete tasks.

To assess learning, students used the whiteboard to complete tasks or the students' book, while their teacher monitored some students' work by walking around the tables and providing feedback. Feedback was prompt, asking students to repeat the correct pronunciation in the case of the vocabulary class and providing and asking for explanations to ensure comprehension. As regards



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differentiation, teachers suggested that students who were lagging behind were provided with extra practice.

Assessment and MEL

Table B2 provides a summary of the assessment approach followed at ICPNA Chiclayo, focusing on the formal assessment used, especially MEL.

Table B2: Assessment practices at ICPNA Chiclayo, Interviews

Assessment	Implementation
<p>Tests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students in regular classes are assessed 10 times in total during the five months of their study. They take one test after the ninth and the 18th teaching day each month. Students in intensive courses are assessed 20 times in total during their 2.5 courses. They take two tests after the ninth and the 18th teaching day each month. • Tests include a reading and an oral component. The PDFs available on the ActiveTeach CD are used for the former.
<p>MEL 25% of final grade</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage: for 80% (16/20) of teachers, MEL is compulsory; 20% (4/20) recommend/actively encourage it; 60% (12/20) view it integral to their course. • Place of usage: MEL activities may be completed at any time or place but it is obligatory that students book 4 hours every month in the computer labs or in the library to use MEL. • Connections between MEL and content learnt: Teachers suggest that linking content learnt in class with the MEL exercises assigned in class is important. Students are to note issues and discuss them in class the following day. • Type of assignments: MEL exercises across the English skills are assigned, especially grammar. Vocabulary, writing, the Grammar Coach videos, the vocabulary using flashcards and games are also used by the majority. • Number of assignments: This varies from teacher to teacher and class to class, according to interviewees. For example, one teacher suggested that fewer assignments are assigned to adult classes as they have less time than teenagers. Teenagers in the focus groups suggested that they were assigned about 30–40 exercises per unit. MEL usage data broadly agrees with this; between 445 and 497 assignments/practices are assigned over the duration of the course. • Assignment-completion time frame: This varies. One teacher usually leaves the exercises open for the whole 18 day 'cycle'; another for nine days (until the midterm or end-of-term exam); and another assigns about 12 exercises every three days. • Number of attempts: This varies although usually unlimited attempts are allowed. 79% (15/19) of teachers in the questionnaire find it important that students repeat activities until they get the correct answer. Repeating practices was also seen as a demonstration of the effort students put into their studies as well as important in supporting the development of skills such as resilience.

Assessment	Implementation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests: Their use is not widespread. • Scoring/grading MEL practices: Teachers seem to use different criteria. One interviewee counted students' completion rates and student attitude towards MEL and allowed for unlimited attempts. Another counted only the first attempt, as s/he considered it to be the most valid but also rewarded those who did extra assignments. • Monitoring of student progress: Teachers appear to check student completion rates between every three and every 18 days. 84% (16/19) teachers in the questionnaire reported that they required students to track their own progress. • Feedback on MEL assignments: Feedback focuses on completion rates. Feedback is often given in class or by email. Some students mentioned that they may also receive further individual support, either via email or through written feedback.
25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude in class; class participation; and attendance

Training and ongoing support on MEL for teachers

The lab technician is responsible for all new staff as part of their induction, where Top Notch materials, are introduced, as well as the institutional approach to implementing MEL. According to co-ordinators, teachers are asked to find, view and complete practice assignments themselves, as well as to use the email function to potentially provide feedback to students. After this initial training, co-ordinators invite new teachers to the computer lab to further familiarize themselves with MEL and the other Top Notch material, to ask questions and to provide feedback. If it is more convenient, a co-ordinator or another colleague trains teachers directly. Five out of 20 teachers report to have been trained by a colleague only. In the minority of cases (3/20 teachers), questionnaire respondents indicated that they had been given handouts or had trained themselves instead.

Table B4: Teacher training on MEL, teacher questionnaire

Type of training	N	%
A Pearson representative trained me (only).	3	15%
A Pearson representative AND a colleague trained me.	1	5%
A colleague responsible for MEL trained me (only).	4	20%
A colleague responsible for MEL trained me AND I was given handouts.	2	10%
A colleague responsible for MEL AND another colleague trained me.	1	5%
A colleague responsible for MEL, another colleague AND a Pearson representative trained me.	1	5%
A colleague from my institution trained me (only).	5	25%
I was given instructions through handouts (only).	2	10%
I was not trained – I learned by myself.	1	5%
Total	20	100%

Overall, the training seems to support teachers, but it was not always prompt for all. Although 85% (17/20) of teachers reported that the training they received allowed them to use MEL effectively, 42% (8/19) indicated that they were trained after they had started to use MEL with students.

Importantly, 53% (10/19) indicated that they needed ongoing support and that a colleague (58%, 11/19) or a Pearson representative (21%, 4/19) was able to help them. The lab technician appears to be the main point of contact for ongoing support. They contact Pearson for more complex problems, if they wish, as do teachers. Peer support between teachers is also helpful, according to interviewees.

As for the content of the training, 84% (16/19) indicated that it focused on technical aspects, although 61% (11/18) strongly agreed/agreed that it also covered how MEL could support teaching and learning. Interviewees confirmed this and welcomed further training on pedagogical aspects of how to use MEL, including how to best motivate students to use it. Teachers also felt that further discussions

and sharing of practice between them on how to use MEL, through formally scheduled meetings, could further improve students' experience.

Training and ongoing support for students

The majority of teachers seem to either conduct an orientation in class (63%, 12/19 of teachers in the questionnaire) or ask the computer lab technician who is responsible for MEL-related issues to train students on MEL. Another member of staff may also be involved in training. 37% (7/19) of teachers seem to use a dual approach to training students using both the lab technician and another colleague to train students as well as conducting an orientation in class. A small minority report only providing handouts on how to use MEL to students (see Table B3).

When teachers train students, they report using a 'script' prepared by the co-ordinators. In practice, they support students in registering, joining their course and navigating the platform. During the training, teachers also emphasize that student performance on MEL performance counts for 25% towards students' grade and that the more they practice the higher their score will be.

In terms of ongoing support, administrative or access issues are solved by the lab technician. For assignment-related issues, such as perceived correct answers which are marked incorrect by the system, students usually take a screenshot and email it to their teacher for advice. Although some students are aware that they could email Pearson directly to ask for support with technical issues, teachers suggest that they are reluctant to do so.

Table B3: Student training on MEL, teacher questionnaire

Type of student training on MEL	N ¹	% ²
I conduct an orientation in class (only).	5	25%
I conduct an orientation AND a dedicated MEL person trains students.	4	20%
I conduct an orientation AND a dedicated MEL person trains students AND another member of staff trains students.	1	5%
I conduct an orientation AND another member of staff trains students.	2	10%
A dedicated MEL person trains students (only).	3	16%
Another member of staff trains students (only).	2	10%
I give my students instructions through handouts (only).	2	10%
Total	19	100%

Notes: (1) One response was excluded as options selected were contradictory (I conduct an orientation (only) AND I don't train students); (2) percentages do not total 100, due to rounding.

ICPNA Cusco

ICPNA Cusco is an America binational in the southern highlands. It served about 6,000 students and employed 105 teachers at the time of our visit. It switched to Top Notch's 3rd edition in January 2017 and started using MEL six months before our visit.

ICPNA Cusco offers classes using Top Notch for all ages, including for children as young as nine years old. Its main student population comes from local high schools, and also some universities. The majority of students study in the afternoons and evenings. Arguably, students at ICPNA Cusco are exposed to English more than their counterparts in other Peruvian cities, given that tourism is the main source of income in the area. Many students study English so that they can secure a job in the tourist industry.

Most teachers seemed to be working in the binational for some time and were born and bred in the area. Teacher and student relationships, as observed during the visit, were positive. A strong sense of

community was evident, and teachers and students seemed to know each other well. Having positive student and teacher relationships was emphasized by two teachers as being key to learning. When prompted further as to what this meant, they suggested that it was about knowing students well in order to motivate them and adapting different learning materials to suit their age, interests and background.

Reasons for implementing Top Notch with MEL

A key reason for using Top Notch was to support students' communicative skills, a primary focus for the binational. MEL was seen to offer opportunities to increase student practice of the language outside the classroom, a problem the administration had been trying to solve for some time. Other reasons also led to the decision to use MEL and ActiveTeach. For example, ICPNA Cusco exemplified a strong belief in harnessing technology to support learning as well as the desire to meet the interests of students (and of their parents), who were increasingly drawn to using technology and digital resources. Teachers also believed that technology gave their binational a competitive edge and that it was crucial to its growth.

Readiness for implementation

The relatively widespread enthusiasm shown for MEL and ActiveTeach at ICPNA Cusco seems to be encouraged by the alignment between administrator and teachers' views regarding the role of technology in learning, although some colleagues are yet to be convinced, according to the interviews. Two key factors seem to have contributed to such a positive attitude towards Top Notch:

- ICPNA Cusco's directors sought co-ordinators' advice on whether Top Notch was the right choice. After reviewing the materials, the consensus was that it was indeed the right choice, and all co-ordinators advocated for its use.
- Several teachers had already used MEL during a teacher-training course they attended. They thought it had many advantages, so they were positive about it to other teachers and willing to introduce it to their students.

In terms of infrastructure, ICPNA Cusco invested in computer labs so students could access MEL, and wireless internet and interactive whiteboards or projectors in all classrooms.

Components used

The students' book, ActiveTeach and MEL are the three key Top Notch components. Questionnaire results suggest:

- **The Student's Book:** is used by all teachers for at least three times a week; 81% (13/16) of teachers use it for at least 3 hours weekly; 91% of students (150/164) report using it.
- **ActiveTeach:** is used at least three times a week by 94% (15/16) of teachers.
- **MEL:** is required by all (17/17) teachers who answered this question and 99% of students (162/164) indicate that they used it.

In terms of non-core components used, questionnaire results point to the extra practice activities on English.com (used by 71%, 116/164, of students) and the classroom audio programme (used by 77%, 126/164, of students). Less used components are the print workbook (used by only 2%, 3/164, of students, and three out of 12, of teachers, at least once a week and the Top Notch Go audio app (used by 43%, 70/164, of students).

Course structure

Students attend classes for 18 days in one learning cycle or 'month' (see Table B5 for details). The course curriculum at ICPNA Cusco moves more quickly than it does in other parts of the country. For example, one Top Notch unit is covered in one week, while two weeks are used by most schools.

Table B5: ICPNA Cusco's Top Notch with MEL course structure, interviews.

Course structure	Fundamentals level	Other levels
Number of contact hours	1.5 hours a day, 7.5 hours a week	
Timing of lessons	Varies between 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.	
Cycle length	18 teaching days in one month – covering two or three units	18 teaching days in one month – covering three or four units
Length of course	Four months in total, broken into 1-month courses	

Teaching and learning

The syllabus follows the structure of the book. Teachers are expected to plan lessons with the use of technology, to encourage the use of MEL and to assess learning. Lessons mainly use ActiveTeach, with teachers delivering new content based on observational data. Students use their books and ActiveTeach to complete tasks individually and as a group, but predominantly pair work is used. A variety of games and other activities drawn from Top Notch are also used. With young teenage classes, materials seem to need supplementing more often for two reasons:

- The cultural context is harder for them to understand.
- They need the grammar concepts to be broken down more.

Even so, the majority of teachers (88%, 15/17) indicate that they supplement Top Notch occasionally.

Teacher responses to the questionnaire agree with observation data:

- **Learning new content:** Most teachers (12/17) report having students watch and listen to demonstrations and explanations in almost every lesson.
- **Practice:** Overall, ActiveTeach and the students' book are used to administer a quiz or a test. 69% of teachers report using ActiveTeach to do so in at least half of lessons or more). 80% of teachers report administering a quiz or a test using MEL in half of the lesson or more, while 63% use their own developed assessments.
- **Study skills:** Most teachers (12/17) use language resources provided by Top Notch in roughly half of lessons or more to support student learning.
- **Teaching approach to practice/production:** Pair work was very common in lessons across teachers (94% of teachers using it in roughly half the lessons or more, with 35% using it in almost every lesson), and whole-class discussions are also quite common (82% using them in half of lessons or more, with 53% using them in almost every lesson). Both individual work (76% using it in roughly half the lessons or more) and small-group work (65% using it in roughly half the lessons or more) were relatively less common but still featured fairly prominently in teachers' lessons.
- **Assessing homework:** Reviewing work in the students' book (88% of teachers review students' homework with them using the students' book in half of the lessons or more; 57% using the

print workbook and 56% using MEL). There was also considerable variation among teachers ranging from never or hardly ever using these forms of review to using them in almost every lesson.¹⁴

According to observations and interviews, the structure of the lessons involved first teachers first reviewing previous learning or discussing a prompt related to the overall theme, e.g., showing pictures of different famous people before moving on to the ones covered in the book that day. One teacher described how most lessons also start with stating a learning goal. Activities are practiced on ActiveTeach, with a high degree of student participation. Competitions and games are also used to motivate students. Lessons finish with a verbal output to 'wrap up' the lessons where students apply their new knowledge, e.g., in a conversation.

During the observation, navigation of the students' book and of ActiveTeach was easy for both students and teachers. To support differentiation, students who finish quickly are usually asked to help their peers. In the past, early finishers were given extra practice from the print booklets, but, by using MEL, printing is no longer common practice.

Assessment and MEL

At ICPNA Cusco, the minimum score required for passing is 75%. A students' overall score for a one 'month' cycle consists of:

- 20% for class participation, which includes attendance (5%), punctuality (5%), homework (including MEL; 5 %) and involvement (5%);
- oral exam (25%);
- mid-term written exam (25%), taken after the ninth day of teaching;
- final written exam (30%), after the 18th day.

A summary of how MEL is used is provided in Table B6.

¹⁴ Data on the frequency of using the print workbook to administer and assess homework seem high compared to evidence collected through interviews and other questionnaire questions. This might be due to: (1) teachers who were yet to be trained on ActiveTeach and MEL answering the questionnaire questions; and/or (2) that the question was misunderstood and the workbook was perceived synonymous with the students' book.

Table B6: ICPNA Cusco approach to using MEL

- **Final grade:** MEL counts as 5% towards students' final grade, but all teachers interviewed suggested that it should be more.
- **Usage:** 100% (17/17) teachers reported that MEL was compulsory, and 71% (12/17) viewed it as an integral part of their course.
- **Connections between MEL and content learnt:** MEL is used to consolidate class learning and at times to prepare for the next class.
- **Type of assignments:** Most teachers assign practices across all skills, including the Pronunciation and Grammar Coach videos.
- **Number of assignments:** Teachers are free to assign as many tasks as they want. Although all assignments per unit are assigned, teachers point to those which are compulsory verbally in class. (Teachers suggest that students usually complete more than what is assigned.)
- **Assignment completion time frame:** This seems to vary. According to teachers interviewed, all unit assignments are opened for a whole month in their classes. Students in the focus groups reported that activities were only open for seven days at a time, indicating that their teacher set a shorter time frame to the teachers interviewed.
- **Number of attempts:** This varies. In the questionnaire, 8/17 teachers reported that repeating activities until students get the correct answer is integral to their teaching.
- **Tests:** These are not required by many teachers. 6/17 teachers require unit and/or mid-course tests, 7/17 require tests at the end of the course.
- **Scoring/grading MEL practices:** The pass rate is 75%. Mainly, the effort made by students is taken into account – the quantity of assignments and practices they complete, rather than their actual scores
- **Monitoring of student progress and feedback:** Teachers monitor and provide feedback usually every week, after a unit is completed. Feedback focuses on completion rates. In most cases, teachers speak individually to students whose completions rates are below expectations, although the co-ordinators sometimes are involved if students regularly do not complete tasks. The focus of the feedback is on encouragement. One teacher checks the gradebook in the first class of the week and indicates who has completed the assigned practices and who needs to work on them further. The same teacher described turning feedback into a competitive opportunity to motivate students, e.g., by comparing the time different students spent online. Importantly, 11/17 of teachers reported that they required students to track their own progress on MEL.

Training and ongoing support for teachers

At the time of our visits, not all 105 teaching staff were trained on how to use MEL. The cascade model of training was being used, and there was some way to go until all teachers would be trained. The process followed includes:

- An in-house introduction to MEL by Pearson for the institution's co-ordinators; co-ordinators decide which points need to be addressed with all staff.
- A meeting between each co-ordinator and the teachers they support in the computer lab to deliver additional training, which is 'hands on' with teachers accessing the relevant materials.

For new teachers, a series of workshops is planned or, alternatively, when there is just one new teacher starting, a series of one-to-one sessions with a co-ordinator is planned. Table B8 broadly supports these findings, with a mixture of approaches to teacher-training evident, including both in-house co-ordinators and Pearson training.

Table B8: ICPNA Cusco teacher training on MEL, teacher questionnaire

Type of training	N	% ¹
A Pearson representative trained me (only).	3	18%
A Pearson representative trained me AND I was given handouts.	2	11%
A Pearson representative AND a colleague trained me.	1	6%
A colleague responsible for MEL trained me (only).	3	18%
A colleague responsible for MEL, another colleague AND a Pearson representative trained me.	3	18%
A colleague responsible for MEL AND a Pearson representative trained me.	1	6%
A colleague responsible for MEL trained me AND I was given handouts.	1	6%
A colleague trained me AND I was given handouts.	2	11%
A colleague from my institution trained me (only).	1	6%
TOTAL	17	100%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% due to rounding.

16 out of 17 teachers in the questionnaire indicated that the training they received has allowed them to use MEL effectively, with 13/17 indicating that it was delivered in time before they had to use MEL in class. Further, 7/17 of teachers indicated that they required ongoing support after the training.

Ongoing teacher support is provided in a number of ways. The director appears to take an active role in monitoring the use and application of technology in particular, with regular observations and feedback suggestions for teachers on using technology. This advice appears to include aspects of pedagogy. Less confident teachers are supported by their colleagues, who may help with initial student registration by attending their classes. Co-ordinators also appear to offer ongoing support to colleagues with using MEL. However, one teacher noted that co-ordinators are not always available during class time and 5/17 teachers suggested that a colleague was able to help them when they needed support. Teachers also have monthly meetings or workshops where they review their

experiences of MEL and other materials, which appears to be a source of ongoing training, guidance and support.

All teachers (17/17) indicated that their training focused on technical issues, and the majority (12/17) that it included how MEL can support teaching and learning. Nonetheless, those interviewed suggested that top-up training every few months on new or advanced features of MEL would be appreciated. Top-up training could be provided by Pearson to co-ordinators and cascaded through to the rest of the staff.

Training and ongoing support for students

The majority of teachers report conducting an orientation in class (81%, 13/16), of which three also provide relevant handouts. According to interviews, students are invited to bring their phones into class for the initial registration session at the beginning of their course, which then includes time to practice different activities from the platform. Two out of the 16 teachers in the questionnaire provided handouts only, and one reported that students learn how to use MEL themselves. Other colleagues do not appear to be involved directly in student training.

Table B7: ICPNA Cusco student training on MEL, teacher questionnaire

Type of training	N ¹	% ²
I conduct a MEL orientation in class (only).	10	63%
I conduct a MEL orientation in class AND I give handouts or pictures/examples in class.	3	19%
I give my students instructions through handouts (only).	2	13%
I do not introduce students to MEL – they learn it themselves (only).	1	6%
Total	16	100%

Notes: (1) One response was excluded from the analysis as all possible options were selected; (2) percentages add up to less than 100%, due to rounding.

Student and teacher use of MEL

The use of MEL by teachers and students can be used to make inferences about instructor and student access, experience, and engagement. In addition, patterns of use and the reasons given for using MEL provides a more nuanced portrait of how learners and instructors are enacting blended instruction. The following section provides a descriptive analysis of usage data collected through the student and teacher questionnaires and data extracted from the MEL platform. Analysis of usage data focuses on the reasons for using MEL; students' time spend on assignments/practices; student and teacher frequency of using the gradebook; the number of assignment/practice assigned and completed; and the number of attempts on assignments/practices used.

Reasons for using MEL

The majority of students reported that the main reason they use MEL for is to complete assigned work (74%, 205/277, rows 1–3 in Table B9 show). Nearly 40% of students reported to also use MEL to do additional unassigned practice.

Table B9: Students' main reason for using MEL, student questionnaire

Reason for using MEL	N	%
Complete work that has been assigned by my teacher (exercises, assessments, etc.).	96	35%
Complete work that has been assigned by my teacher, plus extra practice (from the same lesson) my teacher didn't assign.	36	13%
Complete work that has been assigned by my teacher, plus extra practice (for a future lesson) my teacher didn't assign.	73	26%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in listening.	17	6%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in reading.	8	3%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in speaking.	19	7%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in writing.	12	4%
I have not used MEL.	14	5%
Other	2	1%
Total	277	100%

Student weekly use of MEL

Just above half of the student questionnaire respondents (143/283) indicated that they used MEL once or twice a week and 37% (104/283) between three and five times a week. 6% (18/283) of students reported using MEL five or more times per week, while 6% (18/283) do not use it at all.

Table B10: Students' self-reported weekly frequency of using MEL

	Never	1–2 times a week	3–5 times a week	More than 5 times a week	Total student number
% of questionnaire respondents	6% (18)	51% (143)	37% (104)	6% (18)	283

The majority of the students (28%, 81/189) report spending 30 minutes a week on MEL and nearly 20% that they spend one, or two to three hours per week on MEL. There are, however, some differences between the two institutions. Around one in seven students at ICPNA Chiclayo suggest that they do not use MEL, whereas no student from ICPNA Cusco indicates this.

Table B11: Student's self-reported time spent on MEL weekly, survey data

Hours spent on MEL weekly by students	30 minutes	1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4+ hours	Never	Total student number
% of questionnaire respondents	12% (N=35)	19% (N=54)	28% (N=81)	20% (N=58)	9% (N=27)	5% (N=13)	6% (N=17)	285 ¹

Using MEL data, we find that, on average, students at the two institutions appear to spend less than 6 hours using the platform on assignments/practices for the duration of their course (see Table B12).

Table B12: Average time spent on practices and assignments per level, per institution, MEL data

ICPNA Cusco	
Fundamentals	5.9 hours
Top Notch Level 1	4.0 hours
ICPNA Chiclayo	
Fundamentals	4.2 hours
Top Notch Level 2	3.6 hours
Top Notch Level 3	5.2 hours

Using the MEL data once again, we see substantial variation in the average number of hours spent by students per class within the same institution. For ICPNA Chiclayo, the average time spent per class ranged, for the Fundamentals level, between 2.8 hours and 8.4 hours (seven classes). For Level 2, the average time spent per class ranged between 2.4 and 6.8 hours (seven classes). For ICPNA Cusco, for Level 1, the average time spent per class ranged between 2.4 and 5.1 hours (nine classes), and for the Fundamentals level, the average time spent per class ranged between 4.8 and 7.7 hours (nine classes). When separating students in quartiles, we observe substantial differences between time on task within institutions during their one-month courses (see Tables B13 and B14).

Table B13: Time on task by students per quartile, MEL data

Least time on task	Less time on task	More time on task	Most time on task
1st quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	4th quartile
ICPNA Chiclayo			
2.0 hours or less	2.0–3.2 hours	3.2–5.1 hours	5.1 hours or more
ICPNA Cusco			
2.4 hours or less	2.4–4.2 hours	4.2–6.7 hours	6.7 hours or more

How often students and teachers check the gradebook

The gradebook feature is designed to help students self-assess, an important practice for improving one’s learning that, for some learners, can also be motivating. The gradebook also allows teachers to track student progress and personalize learning that can lead to better learner outcomes. Both the above are known in the literature and are also stated in the qualitative data by students and teachers.

Students’ use of the gradebook was variable. Around one-third of students reported that they check the gradebook once or twice per week and a further 18% reported that they check it more frequently. However, more than one fifth of students report that they do not check their progress in the gradebook.

Teachers appear to use the gradebook more consistently, with 32% (12/37) checking it between three and five times a week, and 27% (10/37) checking it between one and two times a week. 11% (4/37) check it every day. Only two teachers indicated that they do not use the gradebook at all.

Table B14: Student and teacher weekly frequency of checking progress using MEL's gradebook, survey data

	Every day	1–2 times a week	3–5 times a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	3+ times during the course	Never	Total student number
Student questionnaire respondents	5% (14)	35% (97)	13% (36)	10% (29)	11% (31)	6% (16)	20% (56)	279
Teacher questionnaire respondents	11% (4)	27% (10)	32% (12)	16% (6)	–	8% (3)	5% (2)	37

It is worth noting that students at ICPNA Chiclayo are less likely to use the gradebook, with nearly twice as many students indicating that they had never used it (27% (43/159) of students for ICPNA Chiclayo suggest they do not use the gradebook in contrast to 15% (18/120) from ICPNA Cusco.

Table B15: Student weekly frequency of checking progress using MEL's gradebook per institution, survey data

	Every day	1–2 times a week	3–5 times a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	3+ times during the course	Never	Total student number
ICPNA Chiclayo	7% (11)	31% (49)	9% (14)	9% (14)	12 (19)	5% (9)	27% (43)	100% (N= 159)
ICPNA Cusco	3% (4)	38% (46)	16% (19)	11% (13)	10% (N= 12)	7% (8)	15% (18)	100% (120)

Number of assignments/practices completed

At ICPNA Chiclayo, all practices were assigned across levels and classes (between 455 and 497). At ICPNA Cusco, for the 10 Fundamentals classes, students were assigned 529 practices, and for the 10 Level 1 classes, students were assigned 310 practices. As regards assignments, numbers varied from 0 to 158 for the ten classes for Fundamentals and from 0 to 87 for Level 1.

The average completion of assignments/practices varied between institutions, and, overall were below 50%.¹⁵

- **ICPNA Chiclayo:** Students complete around 30 practices for Fundamentals and Level 3 levels, although the number is smaller for Level 2 (11 practices). Approximately 10–30% of all practices were completed. There was a substantial variability between classes, with the average number of completions per class ranging from nine to 79 for Fundamentals, and from three to 34 for Level 2. (There were no completions for Level 1 and no variation for Level 3 because there is only one class.)
- **ICPNA Cusco:** Students of the Fundamentals and Level 1 of ICPNA Cusco completed on average around 30% of assignments/practices (22% of practices and 38% of assignments). However, the percentage of completions seems to be a little bit higher for the students of Level 1, at around 45%. There was some variation between classes. The number of completions ranged from 0 to 43 per class for Level 1 and ranged from 0 to 71 per class for Fundamentals. The number of assignments completed per class varies substantially from class to class. For the Fundamentals level, the number of assignments completed ranged from 14 to 66. For the two Level 1 classes whose students completed assignments, on average, one class completed 10 assignments and the other 39 assignments.

¹⁵ The teachers assigned all the available practices to the students, irrespective of the duration of the course (typically one month). As a result, using the recorded number of assignments was unreliable. We adjusted the number of assigned tasks by dividing by 5, which is the total duration of the whole level. As a result, the percentage of completions may not be entirely accurate.

Table B16: Average assignments/practices and tests assigned and average number completed, MEL data

Class	Practices		Assignments	
	Assigned	Completed	Assigned	Completed
ICPNA Chiclayo				
Fundamentals	455/5 = 91	28 (31%)	–	–
Top Notch Level 2	445/5 = 89	11 (12%)	–	–
Top Notch Level 3	497/5 = 100	31 (31%)	–	–
ICPNA Cusco				
Fundamentals	529/5 = 106	23 (22%)	92	35 (38%)
Top Notch Level 1	310/5 = 62	30 (48%)	7	3 ¹ (43%)

Note: (1) Due to the small number of assignments completed at the Level 1 for ICPNA Cusco, this data will be removed from further analysis (except from the average performance) as it will not produce reliable information.

When separating students in quartiles, we observe substantial differences on assignment/practice completions within institutions during their one-month courses.

Table B17: ICPNA Chiclayo: student assignment/practice completions by quartile, MEL data

Least completions	Less completions	More completions	Most completions
1 st quartile	2 nd quartile	3 rd quartile	4 th quartile
4% or less assignments/practices	4–16% assignments/practices	16–35% assignments/practices	35% or more assignments/practices

Table B18: ICPNA Cusco: student assignment/practices completions by quartile, MEL data

Least completions	Less completions	More completions	Most completions
1 st quartile	2 nd quartile	3 rd quartile	4 th quartile
1% or less assignments/practices	1–27% assignments/practices	27–66% assignments/practices	66% or more assignments/practices

Number of attempts on assignments/practices

On average, across institutions and levels, the majority of assignments/practices were completed using one attempt. The percentage of tasks completed using one attempt ranged from 40% to 55%, bar one level. In the remaining cases, two attempts were mostly used. Specifically:

- **ICPNA Chiclayo:** For the Fundamentals and Level 2, the majority of tasks were completed using one attempt. The majority of Level 3 students tended to use two attempts with similar proportions of task found to have been completed using one or three attempts.



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- **ICPNA Cusco:** The majority of practices were completed using one attempt (55% for Fundamentals and 44% for Level 1). The remaining practices were completed using two attempts and a small number were completed using three or more attempts.¹⁶

¹⁶ Please note that it is not possible to discuss variability between classes due the small sample size per class to be broken down.

Table B19: Percentage of number of attempts of assignments/practices per level, MEL data

Level	No of attempts				
	1	2	3	4	5+
ICPNA Chiclayo – Practices					
Fundamentals	988 (48%)	576 (28%)	248 (12%)	122 (6%)	107 (5%)
Top Notch Level 2	361 (40%)	294 (32%)	186 (21%)	45 (5%)	23 (3%)
Top Notch Level 3	115 (24%)	146 (31%)	119 (25%)	46 (10%)	46 (10%)
ICPNA Cusco – Practices					
Fundamentals	2763 (55%)	1341 (27%)	470 (9%)	198 (4%)	267 (5%)
Top Notch Level 1	2236 (44%)	1573 (31%)	681 (14%)	263 (5%)	308 (6%)
ICPNA Cusco – Assignments					
Fundamentals (only assignments)	3952 (51%)	2120 (27%)	993 (13%)	305 (4%)	365 (5%)

Student performance on MEL

Student progress on assignments provides an indicator of student learning and achievement over time. Performance on MEL assignments is the only source of student performance data that we have from these institutions. In this section, we describe average student performance by institution and assignment type. We are also able to investigate the relationship between completion of assignments and performance (i.e. scores) on those assignments. Finally, we offer evidence that individual assignment scores are relatively reliable indicators of student learning that can be confidently used by instructors to monitor progress over time.

Overall student performance on MEL assignments/practices

Overall, students had a high performance on assignments/practices, as shown by the average scores. (Everything above 70% is considered a pass.) In detail:

- **ICPNA Chiclayo:** The overall average assignment/practice score is around 94% and there are no major discrepancies between the mean scores of students of different levels. The average class performance on practices ranges between 83% and 99% for the Fundamentals level (seven classes) and between 93% and 96% for Level 2 (seven classes).
- **ICPNA Cusco:** The overall average assignment/practice score is around 93%, and there are no major discrepancies between the mean scores of the students of the Fundamentals and Level 1.

At a class level, findings are mixed. In some cases, the variability is small and in others it is large, especially in Fundamentals for practices and in Level 1 for assignments. In more detail, there is little variability between the average class performance for assignments (an average of 69% for one class and 66% for another). For eight classes of the Fundamentals level, the average class performance ranges between 34% and 68%. For practices, the average class performance ranges between 88% and 98% for Fundamentals (nine classes) and between 76% and 95% for Level 1 (nine classes).

Table B20: Average performance on tasks per institution, MEL data

Level	Average practice score	Average assignment score
ICPNA Chiclayo (average practice = 94)		
Fundamentals	92	–
Top Notch Level 2	95	–
Top Notch Level 3	98	–
ICPNA Cusco (average practice score = 93; average assignment score = 92)		
Fundamentals	96	90
Top Notch Level 1	91	92

Reporting the students' performance by score band is important in order to inspect the number of students who fail (below 70%) or who get the top score (above 90%).

- **ICPNA Chiclayo:** most students (79%) receive an average practice grade of 90% or higher.
- **ICPNA Cusco:** 73% of students receive an average practice score higher than 90%, and almost all the students received an average score of 70% or more.

Table B21: Percentage of students achieving within different score bands, MEL data

Performance band	% of students		
	ICPNA Chiclayo (practices)	ICPNA Cusco (practices)	ICPNA Cusco (assignments)
Below 50%	1 (1%)	–	1 (1%)
50–59%	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
60–69%	2 (1%)	6 (2%)	5 (3%)
70–79%	7 (4%)	16 (6%)	8 (4%)
80–89%	22 (14%)	49 (18%)	40 (22%)
90–100%	128 (79%)	199 (73%)	124 (69%)

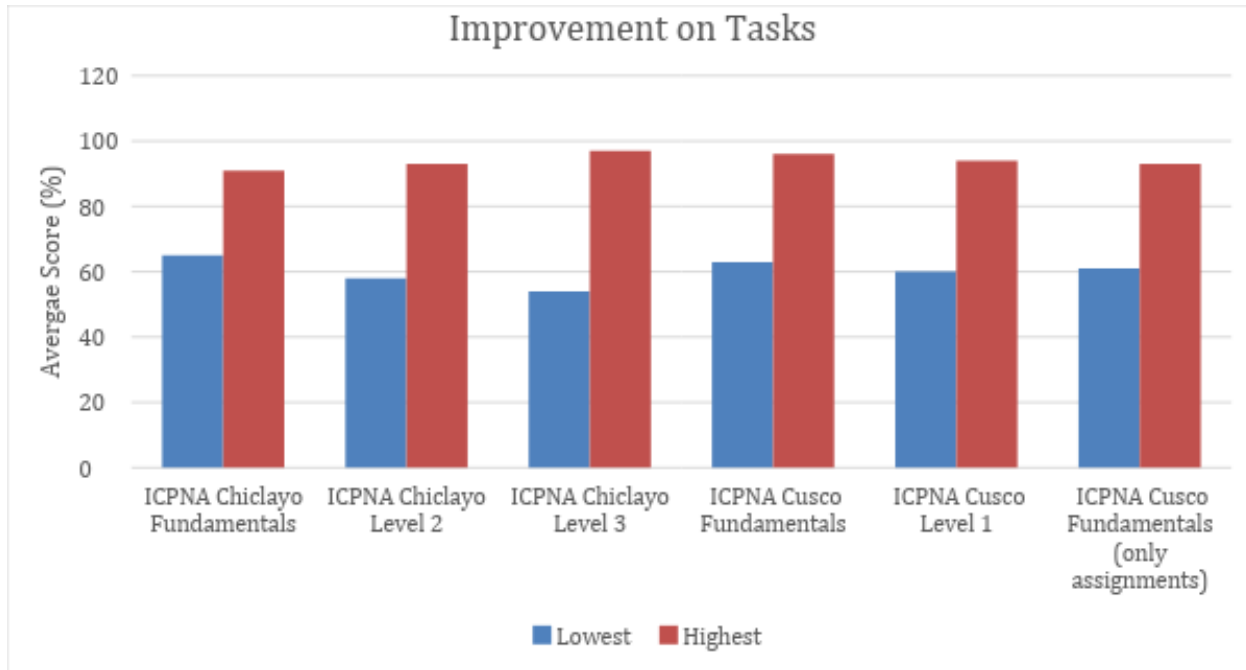
Note: The results for practices do not change significantly if the zero scores are not removed from the analysis, but there are some major changes to the distribution of assignments scores. (See Appendix C)

Student progress on assignments/practices

Progress from students' first to highest attempt (which, as mentioned earlier in this report, is nearly indistinguishable from the last attempt) is quite astonishing.

- **ICPNA Chiclayo:** Improvements ranged from 26 to 43 percentage points for the three levels (Fundamentals, Level 2 and Level 3). There was a significant variability between the average improvement of classes. The average improvement ranged between 18 and 29 percentage points (six classes) for Fundamentals and between 24 and 49 percentage points (seven classes) for Level 2.
- **ICPNA Cusco:** Improvements ranged between 32 and 34 percentage points and is very similar between assignments and practices. There was significant variation between the average improvement per class, ranging from 31 to 40 points per class (nine classes) for Level 1 practices, between 29 and 34 points per class (eight classes) for Fundamentals assignments and between 29 and 40 points (nine classes) for Fundamentals practices.

Figure B1: Average student progress between first and highest attempts by level, MEL data



Correlation between students' average assignment/practice scores and percentage of assignment/practices completed

Overall, the data indicate that higher completion of assignments/practices is associated with higher scores. In five out of six cases (see Table B22 below), there is a positive correlation between the average assignment/practice score and the number of assignments/practices completed. The correlations for ICPNA Chiclayo were between 0.35 and 0.57, all statistically significant at least at the $p < 0.05$ level. Two of the correlations for ICPNA Cusco were statistically significant (0.43 and 0.23; both significant at least at the 0.003 level), but the other one was not.

Interestingly, the correlations for Fundamentals at ICPNA Cusco appear to be non-significant because they consist of non-homogeneous correlations at the class level. For some classes, the correlations are positive, and for some classes they are negative; in almost all cases, however, they are not statistically significant so they are not reported here. This indicates that further research to understand why these differences occur is needed.

Table B22: Correlation between number of assignments/practices completed and average assignment/practice score, MEL data

Level	Pearson's r	Spearman's rho
ICPNA Chiclayo		
Fundamentals	$r = 0.35, p = 0.003$	$\rho = 0.28, p = 0.02$
Top Notch Level 2	$r = 0.35, p = 0.001$	$\rho = 0.28, p = 0.01$
Top Notch Level 3	$r = 0.57, p = 0.03$	$\rho = 0.48, p = 0.08$
ICPNA Cusco		
Fundamentals (practices only)	$r = 0.03, p = 0.779$	$\rho = -0.13, p = 0.152$
Fundamentals (assignments only)	$r = 0.23, p = 0.003$	$\rho = 0.19, p = 0.018$
Top Notch Level 1	$r = 0.43, p < 0.001$	$\rho = 0.39, p < 0.001$

Correlation between the average unit assignment/practice scores

Assignments and practices are relatively reliable indicators of students' performance. So, the average performance of students on assignments/practices of one unit could be used as an indication of students' future performance in another unit. For each student, the average assignment/practice score was computed for all the exercises of each unit. Then these average assignment/practice scores for each student and for each unit were correlated between them, in the same way one may correlate the items of a test.)

- **ICPNA Chiclayo:** The correlations for ICPNA Chiclayo mainly ranged between 0.31 (1st quartile) and 0.66 (3rd quartile), with a mean of 0.49 (41 out of 69 correlations, a percentage of 60%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level).
- **ICPNA Cusco:** The correlations for practices for ICPNA Cusco mainly ranged between 0.10 (1st quartile) and 0.36 (3rd quartile), with a mean of 0.29 (7 out of 13 correlations, a percentage of 54%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level). For assignments, for ICPNA Cusco, the



Pearson

correlations ranged from 0.34 (1st quartile) to 0.61 (3rd quartile) with a mean of 0.43 (14 out of 20 correlations, a percentage of 70%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level).

Table B23: Correlations between the average scores per unit for assignments/practices, MEL data

	ICPNA Chiclayo practices	ICPNA Cusco
Average correlation	0.49	0.29
1st quartile	0.31	0.10
3rd quartile	0.66	0.36
	Assignments	
Average correlation	–	0.43
1st quartile	–	0.34
3rd quartile	–	0.61

Note: We only report correlations based on 15 or more pairs of scores.

Student and teacher perceptions of Top Notch with MEL

This section provides evidence from student and teacher questionnaires, interviews and focus groups on the perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL that maps directly to the learner outcomes of Top Notch with MEL – namely access, engagement, positive learning behaviors, achievement, preparation for the next level in learning and achieving one’s goal.

The section considers Top Notch as a whole package and each of its major components individually, outlining their perceived impact on students first and then on teachers, where relevant. (Tables B24-B29 provide students’ and teachers’ perceived impact of the Top Notch package and the Student’s Book, ActiveTeach and MEL.)

Before presenting Tables 36 to 41, we summarize some institutional factors noted in the data that have affected implementation. These factors related to infrastructure and teaching and learning.

Infrastructure

- Limited infrastructure in one institution, e.g. lack of relevant equipment for use of MEL in the classrooms as desired by some teachers and lack of internet access within classrooms, inhibits teachers from fully implementing MEL.
- A minority of students have no access to computers and internet outside their institution or are faced with slow connections and inadequate equipment.

Teaching and Learning

- The benefits of using the email function in MEL in teaching and learning could be further communicated; one teacher positively noted that student engagement is increased when the email function is used frequently.

Top Notch and the Student's Book

Table B24: Top Notch with MEL - perceived impact on student outcomes, across data sources

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experiences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students in the focus groups repeatedly noted that they liked how Top Notch worked as a whole and were overwhelmingly positive about all of its components. When asked if there was anything that needed changing, several said that there was nothing. According to staff in one institution, parents were also happy with Top Notch with MEL. Students' Net Promoter Score (NPS)¹⁷ is +21.5. Questionnaire results suggest that 44% (122/280) of students rate their likeliness to recommend Top Notch as 9 or 10/10 and a further 34% (96/280) as 7 or 8/10. Only 22% chose 6/10 or below. 	N/A
Positive learning behaviors/engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to the questionnaire, the large majority of students believed that since using Top Notch their confidence had increased in learning English (96%, 269/279 and 100%, 36/36 teachers); reading (97%, 268/277); listening (96%, 263/273); writing (93%, 255/273); and speaking (62% overall, 178/285). The percentage for speaking, however, is skewed down by one institution where just 22% of students agreed that their confidence had increased in speaking. In the other institution, 94% of students strongly agreed/agreed that it had improved. 89% (32/36) of teachers reported that Top Notch supported their goal of increasing their students' confidence in speaking English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further consideration could be given to how Top Notch materials and training help teachers to encourage the development of speaking and its teaching and assessment; 78% of students in one institution disagreed that their confidence in speaking had increased since using Top Notch with MEL.

¹⁷ The Net Promoter Score is an index ranging from -100 to 100 that measures the willingness of customers to recommend a company's products or services to others. It is used as a proxy for gauging the customer's loyalty to the brand (renewals) and overall satisfaction with a company's product or service.

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students also believed that it helped them significantly/very significantly to: enjoy learning English (96%, 266/278); to improve their confidence in learning and speaking English and to engage with learning English (95%, 268/281; 265/280; 263/277 respectively); as well as to improve their motivation to learn English (94%, 261/279). All or nearly all (35/36) teachers in the questionnaire reported that Top Notch significantly/very significantly helped them to achieve their goals for their students to enjoy learning English; to engage them with interesting content; to improve their motivation to learn English; and to increase their confidence in listening. 92% (33/36) of teachers said that Top Notch helped increase students' confidence in reading; 89% (32/36) in speaking English and 86% (31/36) in writing. 	
Achievement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 89% of students (247/278) reported that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly supported them in improving their English; 95% (263/278) said that it had improved their writing skills; 94% (between 259 and 261/277) said that it had improved their speaking, listening and vocabulary skills; and 93% (259/278) that it had improved their grammar skills. 	N/A
Progression	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 96% (262/273) of students strongly agreed/agreed that Top Notch with MEL prepared them well for the next level of their English studies; and 97% (264/273) said that it had significantly/very significantly done so. 96% (261/271) also indicated that Top Notch with MEL was preparing them well to achieve their goal, with 95% (261/275) suggesting that it had significantly/very significantly done so. Nearly all teachers (35/36) suggested that Top Notch significantly/very significantly helped students' progress according to their age and level, and aptitude. 83% (29/35) of teachers said that the package significantly/very significantly supported their goals to prepare students to pass high-stakes external exams. 	N/A

Table B25: Top Notch: perceived impact on teachers and the institution, teacher survey and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Teacher access and experience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers find MEL accessible. They report that it is easy to access their account in their computer or laptop (37/37 teachers) and smartphone (91%, 32/35), and that it is easy to navigate the content in MEL (92%, 34/37) and to assign assignments (92%, 33/36) Overall, teachers were positive about Top Notch. They thought highly of its quality and comprehensiveness and enjoyed teaching using it. Teachers felt supported and listened to by Pearson representatives, according to interviews. Several also noted how their suggestions had been actively taken on board and incorporated into newer versions. Questionnaire results show that teachers' NPS score is +78, with the mean likeliness to recommend Top Notch given as 9.3 out of 10. 78% (28/36) chose options 9 or 10/10, and 22% (8/36) 7 or 8/10. No scores below 6 are recorded. 	N/A
Teacher positive learning behaviors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers reported that Top Notch significantly/very significantly supported their confidence in teaching English (91%, 32/35) and confidence in teaching English of teachers new to the profession 94% (33/35). 	N/A
Teaching	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire results suggest that Top Notch significantly/very significantly: saved on preparation time (92%, 33/36); assessed student performance effectively (92%, 33/36); supported lesson planning effectively and differentiated teaching in mixed-ability groups (91%, 32/35); helped differentiate teaching (91%, 32/35); helped understand the pedagogy required (89%, 32/36); and filled classroom hours with work-related activities (86%, 31/36). Overall, according to the interviews, the quantity and variety of Top Notch materials support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers suggested that including the test generator and the assessment pack used in previous editions, could provide additional assistance in preparing their own tests. Additional reading materials provided by Top Notch would be useful to support students who are to sit

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
<p>teaching, according to the interviews. For example, one interviewee referred to the quantity of the materials and how they allowed them to meet the goals of the lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers found that Top Notch encouraged them to embed speaking into their teaching, particularly in the latest version, where it is clear how all the activities (grammar, listening, etc.) included in a lesson support a conversation output at the end of every lesson. 	<p>international exams. Teachers praised the 'Copy and Go' Top Notch materials and suggested that they are helpful to support this need. 'Copy and Go' have been moved to ActiveTeach. It was evident that teachers were not aware of this.</p>
Impact on the institution/English department	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers indicate that Top Notch has the following impact across their institution. It significantly/very significantly supports improvements in teaching English (97%, 34/35); it encourages consistency in teaching across the department (97%, 34/35); it encourages more collaboration between teachers (86%, 30/35); and it increases conversations about teaching English (89%, 31/35). 	<p>N/A</p>

Table B26: Students' book's perceived impact on students, surveys and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experience/engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and teacher interview data indicate that the students' book is accessible. The book's design is welcoming, and its structure is logical and easy to navigate. • The large majority of students and teachers agreed/strongly agreed that the book was: interesting (96% of students, 277/288; 100%, 37/37, of teachers); relevant to real life (96% of students, 277/288); 97%, 36/37 of teachers); at the right level of difficulty (98% of students, 281/288 and 95%, 35/37 of teachers); up-to-date (97% of students, 271/280); relevant to students' culture despite not having originated from Peru (92%, 252/275 of students; 84%, 31/37 of teachers). • 87% (241/276) and 69% (182/263) of students agree/strongly agree that the English.com website and Top Notch Go audio app were easy to access, respectively • Overall, students at both institutions found the topics in Top Notch to be engaging and, according to teachers, students were less likely to be distracted in class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers suggested that further customising content to life in Peru and to local contexts would help students to better relate with content, as some topics are not directly relevant to them, e.g. topics like 'rent a car'. • In one of the institutions, co-ordinators suggested that the CDs, which were previously available in the Student's Book and popular with students, could be provided as smartphone downloads.
Achievement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to interviewees, the book's dialogue prompts support students' speaking. • The following were also named by student and teacher interviewees as supporting learning: the clear progression between lessons, the clear grammar explanations, grammar/vocabulary boosters and the 'More Vocabulary' sections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further pictorial representation of words in the 'More Vocabulary' section could maybe enhance understanding of difficult concepts.

ActiveTeach

Overall, the impact of ActiveTeach on students is positive. According to interviews, students found ActiveTeach motivating because of the use of technology. Students also found ActiveTeach's interactivity motivating because it allowed them to be more actively involved in their learning and also thought that it helped them retain information better; they generally described the videos, crosswords and games as being 'fun'. According to interviews and focus groups, listening to and watching interactive clips, the interactive exercises, the flashcards, the pronunciation videos and those modelling how to extend a conversation were most useful to learning. Further, all teachers who answered this question (35/35) strongly agreed/agreed that the conversation activator videos in ActiveTeach had supported improvements in students' speaking skills.

Table B27 outlines the perceived impact of ActiveTeach on teachers.

Table B27: ActiveTeach: perceived impact on teachers, teachers survey and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 97% (36/37) of teachers in the questionnaire indicated that ActiveTeach was easy to access, and 89% (32/36) that it was easy to download, which interviews and observations confirmed. 100% (37/37) of teachers suggested that there was a good variety of support materials in ActiveTeach. According to interviews, teachers found it helpful that all materials were available in one place, making activities easy to locate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future research should revise the answer options and further investigate how respondents interpret them, given the question related to ActiveTeach software was potentially invalid. Thus, we suggest discounting the finding that 23% (8/35) of teachers suggested that they do not use ActiveTeach because they had too many problems downloading the software. Further training or the development of further materials for teachers on why and how to use advanced features could be provided.
Improving teaching	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 97% (35/36) of teachers agree/strongly agree that ActiveTeach has improved the quality of their lessons. ActiveTeach appears to support lesson planning, and saved time and made it easier for teachers to prepare lessons. The instant access to extra activities, especially the grammar, and the comprehensive bank of multimedia resources to be manipulated on screen, rather than by printing and cutting, were seen as especially useful. In the questionnaire 94% (33/35) of teachers suggested that they use ActiveTeach to prepare for class. 97% (33/34) of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that all the interactive whiteboard tools on ActiveTeach were useful. They also find the following very useful/useful to teaching: being able to save work completed in order to return to it in a following class; Top Notch TV (100%) and videos, because they provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional tests materials per unit (particularly listening tests) would be helpful for teachers so that they did not have to create their own. Additional tests These can also be used with students who have to do retakes and are already familiar with the original test content. The currency of the Top Notch songs could be reviewed as well as the matching of the audios to the listening activities, some of the interviewees suggested.

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
<p>real-life examples of English usage; the interactive games (97%, 36/37); the audio and video transcripts, supporting student understanding of more challenging clips (97%, 36/37); the flash cards on the player app (95%, 35/37); unit tests (94%, 33/35), and mid-term and final review tests (94%, 34/36)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 80% and 89% of teachers in the questionnaire also found the following useful to learning: the lesson planner (89%, 33/37); the oral progress charts (89%, 32/36); the printable extension activities (89%, 32/36); the methodology section (86%, 32/37); the answer keys (86%, 32/37); and the Top Notch pop songs (81%, 29/36). • Further, 100% (35/35) of teachers found the pronunciation and grammar coach videos, grammar and vocabulary exercises and the vocabulary flashcards very useful; 83% (30/36) found the concentration or quiz-show games very useful/useful. 	
Encourages standardization of teaching across	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ActiveTeach guides teachers in using all the different methodologies in the package and encourages standardization as teachers cannot pick and choose at random. 	N/A

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Table B28: MEL: perceived impact on students, across data source

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experiences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students agree/strongly agree that they could access MEL easily on a computer (86%, 246/285) and smartphone/tablet (76%, 211/279); that it is easy to navigate (87%, 245/281); and that it is easy to access assignments (84%, 237/281). Students in the focus groups also liked having access to MEL at any time and on multiple devices. Teachers suggest that MEL, particularly through the use of smartphones, frees up learning for students outside of the classroom and at any time of the day, which helps learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students agree/strongly agree that MEL is engaging (91%, 241/265); that they enjoy learning by completing assignments (87%, 229/264); and that there is a good variety of exercises and tests in MEL (93%, 260/281; 91%, 253/277, respectively). Students find MEL motivating and enjoyable because it is dynamic due to its interactivity, especially the games, and they can see their scores which motivated them to continue. Teachers suggest that MEL allows contact with the English language at home, which students wouldn't necessarily have otherwise. 17% (47/278) rate their likelihood to recommend MEL as 9 or 10/10, 16% (44/278) as 7 or 8/10 and 67% (187/278) as 6 or below. This results in an NPS of -50.4. Data suggest that students in one institution are far less likely to recommend MEL (mean of 3.8) than in the other (mean of 7.7). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MEL engagement could be further supported by activities that are customized more to students' experiences and support external motivation, e.g. through messages that praise students when they correctly answer a question, focus groups suggested. Students also thought that engagement could be enhanced through holograms, live streaming and connecting users online to e.g. compete through playing games.
Positive learning behaviours	

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students take responsibility for their learning, according to teachers, because they manage their own log-in details, meet deadlines; and revise content learnt in class on which they think they need more practice. Students' confidence in participating in class and in taking exams has increased, according to interviewees. This is due to MEL building a sense of achievement and progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students make mistakes and repeat exercises, without peer judgement. Students are able to attend classes feeling prepared by completing relevant activities at home. Teachers indicate that MEL promotes self-monitoring and self-assessment; students are able to identify gaps in their knowledge and take appropriate next steps, e.g., to either practise or ask a teacher. 	<p>N/A</p>
Achievement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% of students (248/260) agree/strongly agree that using MEL helps them to understand content from class. Students in focus groups also find the correspondence between the book's exercises and those in MEL helpful, and that MEL extends learning time and helps them refresh what they learned in class as it complemented the explanations given by teachers in class. The quantity of MEL activities is sufficient to support all skill areas, particularly speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary and writing in the latest edition, according to interviewees, and allowed students many opportunities to practice their learning. Most students in the questionnaire suggested that MEL supported all skills well and found the following very useful/useful: 93% (240/257) the grammar exercises; 93% (237/255) the writing exercises; 92% (237/259) the vocabulary exercises; 91% (235/259) the pronunciation coach videos; 90% (226/252) the vocabulary flashcards; and 82% (207/253) the concentration games or quizzes. The following are also found useful to learning by students: repeating activities to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More pronunciation activities and vocabulary activities to help learn synonyms would be welcomed, students and teachers suggested. Reviewing the setting of the autoscoring system regarding punctuation and spelling in particular in free text activities would also be appreciated, interviews and focus groups suggest.

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
<p>improve scores (91%, 234/257); seeing the grade summaries and being able to track progress (91%, 234/257); the ability to check answers immediately (91%, 234/258); seeing assignment completion dates (87%, 226/261); the feedback they get from MEL helps them understand how to improve their English (80%, 213/266), with one institution's students seeing the value of this more than in the other; and the ability to email teachers (59%, 147/249).</p>	

Table B29: MEL: perceived impact on teachers, teacher survey and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to assess and to assign homework instantly has reduced teaching workload and saves time, according to various interviewees. • The NPS score for teachers is +80. Teachers’ mean likeliness to recommend is 9.4 out of 10. 80% (28/35) gave a score of 9 or 10/10, and a further 20% (7/35) indicated 7 or 8/10. No teacher gave a score of 6/10 or below. 	N/A
Teaching	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% (33/36) of teachers found MEL very useful/useful in saving preparation time. • Many MEL features appear to support assessment, according to teachers in the questionnaire, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the ability to track progress: (97%, 35/36, of teachers). All interviewees agreed ○ auto-grading: 94% (33/35) of teachers suggested that this significantly/very significantly supports their needs as a teacher; ○ the variety of exercises and tests available (97%, 35/36 of teachers agreed/strongly agreed with this); ○ email: 68% of teachers (23/34) found this very useful/useful; ICPNA Chiclayo staff indicated that this helps regular contact with less-regular attenders; ○ allowing students to repeat activities (94%, 34/36); ○ setting completion dates (94%, 34/36); ○ unit and mid-course/end-of-course tests (86%, 30/35). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some teachers requested further training to increase their familiarity and use of MEL as well as. • To compliment the usefulness of the gradebook, teachers suggested the development of an alert system which identifies underperforming students and notifies them. • Materials to support institutions with student training on MEL could enhance students use of the platform as well as further support consistent messages to be communicated to all students across institutions, i.e. students’ ability to ask questions directly to Pearson from the platform was not a feature known to all students in the focus groups.

Appendix C: Additional data tables

Table C1: Percentage of students achieving within different score bands in MEL assignments/practices with 0% removed

Performance band	% of students		
	ICPNA Chiclayo (practices)	ICPNA Cusco (practices)	ICPNA Cusco assignments (only Fundamentals level)
Below 50%	2 (1%)	–	78 (41%)
50–59%	2 (1%)	5 (2%)	16 (8%)
60–69%	10 (6%)	11 (4%)	17 (9%)
70–79%	7 (4%)	18 (7%)	20 (11%)
80–89%	24 (15%)	58 (21%)	23 (12%)
90–100%	116 (71%)	179 (66%)	35 (19%)

Table C2: Summary of inputs and classroom practices

Inputs	ICPNA Chiclayo	ICPNA Cusco
Infrastructure/readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab technician/staff member responsible for MEL • Computer suite(s): Yes • Interactive whiteboards in some classrooms • Wi-Fi access in some classrooms • iPads available for teachers to use with students in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lab technician/staff responsible for MEL • Computer suite(s): Yes • Interactive whiteboards or projectors in all classrooms • Wi-Fi access in all classrooms
Standardization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several key components of Top Notch are mandatory for the majority of students: Student's Book (97%, 121/125), MEL (78%, 94/120), and the classroom audio programme (86%, 108/125) • Teachers have some choice, leading to variable implementation (e.g. 63% reported administering their own developed assessments in lessons) • Some variation in the frequency of using MEL and/or the print workbook; the majority appear to use a combination • The lack of relevant infrastructure appeared to inhibit the standardization of MEL amongst teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several key components of Top Notch are used by the majority of students: Student's Book: 91% of students (150/164) reported use and all teachers surveyed used it at least three times a week; 81% (13/16) used it for at least three hours a week. • ActiveTeach: 94% (15/16) of teachers surveyed used it at least three times a week • Classroom audio programme: 77% (126/164) of students said they used this programme • MEL is required by all (17/17) teachers who answered this question and 99% of students (162/164) indicated that they used it • Teachers are expected to plan lessons with technology to encourage the use of MEL
Training (teachers and students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers: 85% trained by Pearson and/or colleague (17/20); 15% self-taught or learned via handouts (3/20) • Focus of training content: 84% (16/19) technical aspects; 61% (11/18) also received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers: 100% trained by Pearson and/or colleague (17/17) • Cascade model used to train teachers over time using a combination of workshops or one-to-one sessions with in-house co-ordinators and Pearson training • Focus of training content: 100% (17/17) technical aspects; 71%

Inputs	ICPNA Chiclayo	ICPNA Cusco
	<p>training on how MEL could support teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers were positive about the timing and relevance of the training. 85% (17/20) of teachers reported that the in-house training allowed them to use MEL effectively Ongoing support from designated colleague (58%, 11/19) or Pearson representative (21% 4/19) Students: Teacher or other staff conducted orientation (90%, 17/19); or students learnt from handouts only (10%, 2/19) 	<p>(12/17) also received training on how MEL could support teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers were positive about the timing and relevance of the training. 94% (16/17) reported that the in-house training allowed them to use MEL effectively; 77% (13/17) reported that they were trained before they needed to deliver MEL in class 41% (7/17) required ongoing support; support was provided by the director, co-ordinators and colleagues; 29% (5/17) indicated that a colleague was available to support them and 18% (3/17) had received support from a Pearson representative Students: Teachers or other staff members conducted orientation (81%, 13/16), or students learnt by themselves or through handouts only (6%, 3/16)
Practices		
Components in use	<p>Key components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student's Book: 97% (121/125) of students reported its use was mandatory; and all teachers surveyed used it at least three times a week for more than four hours. ActiveTeach: used at least three times a week by all teachers answering the question Classroom audio programme: 86% (108/125) of students said it was mandatory; required by 67% (12/18) of teachers <p>Non-core (but frequently used):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra practice activities on English.com: 68% (75/111) of students reported it as mandatory; 67% (12/18) of teachers reported that it was required 	<p>Key components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student's Book: 91% of students (150/164) reported its use was mandatory; and all teachers surveyed used it at least three times a week; 81% (13/16) used it for at least three hours a week ActiveTeach: 94% (15/16) of teachers surveyed used it at least three times a week Classroom audio programme: 77% (126/164) of students said it was mandatory <p>Non-core (but frequently used):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra practice activities on English.com: 71% (116/164) of students reported using this Print workbook: 2% (3/164) of students reported using the print workbook; 25% (3/12) of teachers reported that they used it at least once a week Top Notch Go audio app: 43% (70/164) of students reported using

Inputs	ICPNA Chiclayo	ICPNA Cusco
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print workbook: 62% (77/125) of students reported that they used this at least once a week, as did 44%, (7/16) teachers who answered the question; 17 teachers indicated that they used it sometimes • Top Notch Go audio app: 50% (53/105) of students said it was mandatory. 	<p>the app</p>
Use of MEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78% (94/120) student said it was mandatory • 80% teachers required it (16/20); 60% (12/20) viewed MEL as integral to their course • It is obligatory that students use MEL for four hours every month in the computer labs or in the library, otherwise activities can be completed at any time or place • MEL is used to link content learned in class with the MEL exercises assigned • MEL exercises are assigned across English, especially grammar. The majority also use vocabulary, writing, the grammar coach videos, the vocabulary flashcards, and games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEL is required by all (17/17) teachers who answered this question and 99% of students (162/164) indicated that they had used it; 71% of teachers (12/17) viewed MEL as integral to their course • MEL is used to consolidate class learning and at times to prepare for the next class • Most teachers assign practices across all skills, including the pronunciation and grammar coach videos. • 56% said they used MEL to review homework in half the lessons or more
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEL counts for 25% of the final grade; use of tests in MEL is not widespread • Students in regular courses are assessed 10 times over five months; those in intensive courses are assessed 20 times over 2.5 months. ActiveTeach PDFs are used to assess reading comprehension • 90% of teachers use Active Teach in half of the lessons to administer tests • 84% use MEL in three-quarters of their lessons to assess learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEL counts as 5% towards the final grade, but all teachers interviewed suggested that it should be more • Tests are not required by many teachers. 35% (6/17) teachers require unit and/or mid-course tests; 41% (7/17) require tests at the end of the course • Use of MEL as part of homework is calculated as part of the course grade • 69% (11/16) of teachers reported using ActiveTeach to administer tests or quizzes in at least half of lessons or more • 80% (12/15) of teachers reported administering a quiz or a test using MEL in half of the lesson or more

Inputs	ICPNA Chiclayo	ICPNA Cusco
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% of teachers administer their own developed assessments in at least half of their lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% (10/16) of teachers administered their own developed assessments in at least half of their lessons
Student activities in class	<p>In almost every lesson, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work individually (35%, 7/20) Work in pairs (65%, 13/20) Work in small groups (50%, 10/20) Participate in whole class discussions (50%, 10/20) 	<p>In half or more lessons, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work individually (77%, 13/17) Work in pairs (94%, 16/17) Work in small groups (65%, 11/17) Participate in whole class discussions (82%, 14/17)
Monitoring (gradebook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers check student completion rates every three to 18 days 84% (16/19) teachers require students to track their own progress in MEL Students: 47% (74/159) check their progress using MEL's gradebook at least once a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers monitor and provide feedback usually every week, after a unit is completed 65% (11/17) of teachers require students to track their own progress in MEL Students: 58% (69/120) check their progress using MEL's gradebook at least once a week