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Future of English

The Economic Value of English

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Viet Nam



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Hilton
TIMES SQUARE





Abbreviations and acronyms

Abberviation	Meaning
AI	Artificial intelligence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CLS	Comprehensive Learning System
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
EMI	English medium instruction
ESL	English as a second language
EVE	Economic Value of English
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
RQ	Research question
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization



1 Background and rationale



1.1 Project design

English is widely recognised as a global lingua franca (Mendes de Oliveira, 2024; Baker et al., 2026).

Globalisation and migration have contributed to increasingly multilingual and multicultural societies in which English is frequently used as a common means of communication among people from different linguistic backgrounds. While access to English is not equally distributed and its role varies across contexts, its widespread use in education, business, science, technology and international communication indicates that it is often associated with access to opportunities at individual, institutional and national levels (Lo Bianco, 2020; Tran et al., 2024).

Research into education policy reports a clear demand at a governmental and societal level for countries to provide more opportunities for their populations to acquire English proficiency (Marconi et al., 2023; Patel et al., 2023). However, there remains limited empirical evidence that quantifies the economic returns associated with investment in English language education, particularly at the national level and across different policy contexts.

To fill this gap, the British Council embarked on a project to develop a framework to highlight the potential financial benefits of a country's investment in its English language learning infrastructure. The aim of the Economic Value of English (EVE) project was to produce a flexible framework capable of being adapted to different national contexts while maintaining a consistent approach to assessing potential economic impact.

The project was designed in two phases, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 | **EVE research design**

Phase 1

Language-in-education policy landscape from different stakeholder perspectives

Phase 2

Framework for assessing the economic impact of English in different contexts



Phase 1: A mixed-methods study was carried out to investigate the language-in-education policy landscape from different stakeholder perspectives. The aim was to understand the drivers behind policies and policy change, the role and use of English, and the factors shaping demand for English within specific national contexts.

The project is titled the Economic Value of English. However, understanding the potential economic impact of English requires an examination not only of economic outcomes but also of the policy environments, stakeholder motivations and implementation processes that shape English language education systems. Therefore, this is where we started.

In 2024, three countries were selected to participate in Phase 1 of the project: Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Viet Nam. These countries provide one example from Latin America, one from the Middle East and one from Southeast Asia. Their differing demographic characteristics, economic structures, educational histories and policy contexts offer an opportunity to explore how aspirations for English language development are interpreted, adapted and implemented within different national settings.

Phase 2: Building on Phase 1, the second phase of the project aims to develop a framework for assessing the economic impact of English in different contexts. We believe this is an important area for investigation. Nevertheless, methodological transparency requires us to acknowledge that it is not yet clear whether the economic impact of a language can be measured directly or attributed with confidence. Given the many factors that influence economic outcomes, establishing a causal relationship between English language proficiency and economic impact presents significant methodological challenges.

Any attempt to identify the economic impact of English would require consideration of medium- and long-term outcomes, as well as the complex relationships between language learning, educational achievement and economic opportunity. Such an analysis would depend on the identification of relevant indicators aligned with policy objectives, together with the systematic collection, storage and tracking of data over time. It would also require collaboration among education stakeholders across a longitudinal period. Therefore, the first step in Phase 2 is to identify potential indicators and assess the availability and quality of data needed to support such an investigation.

This publication reports on the findings of Phase 1 for EVE Viet Nam.





1.2 Project team

This project brought together experts and specialists from a range of educational areas. Without this unique collaboration, the project would not have been possible.



British Council Viet Nam

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Trajectory, Research exploration partner

1.3 Research questions



Four research questions (RQs) were developed to explore language-in-education policies holistically and from the perspective of different actors in the system and simultaneously build a foundation for Phase 2 of the project:

- **RQ1.** Why and when do governments invest in English?
- **RQ2.** To what extent do governments measure the impact of English language-in-education policies? If they do it, how do they do it? What are the key performance indicators?
- **RQ3.** Do English language-in-education policies contribute to economic growth and impact? If so, how is this evidenced? At what level are these impacts?
- **RQ4.** What is the role of English (and other languages) in helping young people (aged 18–23) to achieve their personal, educational and career ambitions?

The stakeholder groups and data collection methods are presented in Section 2.

2 The stakeholder groups



To answer the research questions, this study draws on evidence from five stakeholder perspectives to provide a multifaceted and holistic view of language-in-education policy and English language teaching (ELT) in Viet Nam.

Policy was explored through interview data collected from policymakers and policy influencers involved in shaping or informing policy. Perspectives from industry were obtained through interviews and focus groups with employers, senior executives and other workforce stakeholders. The participants were asked to evaluate the extent to which language-in-education policies and the education system support the development of skills and competencies required in the workforce in Viet Nam. In addition, young adults participated in a survey and focus groups that explored their perceptions of the role of languages in supporting their personal, educational and career aspirations.

Figure 2 illustrates how the different data sources were brought together during analysis, while Table 1 lists the number of participants in each stakeholder group and the data collection methods used. All the data was collected online. Findings from each stakeholder group were analysed independently before being integrated to develop a holistic understanding of English language education policy and practice in Viet Nam. Focus groups with British Council staff were included as additional background information to complement data from other sources. All analysis was informed by the broader literature on language-in-education policy and the education system in Viet Nam. Therefore, this report presents findings by analytic categories and concepts rather than by stakeholder group.

Figure 2 | **Integration of data sources in the analysis framework**



Table 1 | **Stakeholder groups, data collection methods and participant numbers**

Category	Data collection method	Number of participants
Policymakers and policy influencers	Individual interviews	12
Employers and workforce stakeholders	Individual interviews and focus groups	12
Young adults aged 18–23 in university	Survey	619
	Focus groups	20
British Council staff	Focus group	9

2.1 Policymakers and policy influencers

The policymakers and policy influencers in this study comprised a group of senior stakeholders operating across multiple levels of Viet Nam's education system.



Participants included representatives from the Ministry of Education and Training, the Viet Nam National Institute of Educational Sciences, provincial Departments of Education and Training, universities, teacher education institutions and professional associations. While several participants were directly involved in shaping national education and language policies, others played important intermediary roles, supporting the translation of policy into practice through leadership, teacher education, research, curriculum development and professional learning initiatives.

The group brought expertise from a wide range of fields, including English language education, in both basic and higher education, as well as in assessment, educational technology, teacher professional development, innovation and educational leadership. Many had extensive experience working internationally and collaborating with organisations such as the British Council, the US Regional English Language Office and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), alongside active engagement in research and capacity-building. Together, they provided insights into the strategic directions shaping English language education in Viet Nam and the practical challenges and opportunities associated with implementation across diverse educational contexts.

2.2 Employers and workforce stakeholders

The corporate participants in this study represented a diverse group of stakeholders from the public, private, social enterprise and cultural sectors in Viet Nam.



Participants included senior leaders and professionals from organisations operating in areas such as governance, diplomacy, manufacturing, human resources, entrepreneurship, education, media, social development and the creative industries. They occupied a range of positions, including founders, chief executive officers, directors, chief operating officers, human resources specialists and analysts, bringing perspectives from both established institutions and entrepreneurial ventures.

Collectively, these participants offered insights into how English language skills are perceived, valued and used across different sectors of the Vietnamese economy and society. Their experiences reflected a broad range of workforce and organisational contexts, including talent recruitment and development, international engagement, business growth, innovation, social impact and cultural exchange. The group provided perspectives on the role of English in supporting employability, professional mobility, organisational competitiveness and participation in increasingly interconnected local and global networks.



2.3 Young adults



The young adult sample demonstrates a broad geographical spread across Viet Nam.

Respondents were enrolled at universities located across different regions of the country, including Hanoi, Vinh, Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City, Hue, Danang and Can Tho. This representation from a range of institutions captured perspectives from diverse higher education settings. Most respondents were studying languages and translation, although there was also representation from education, business, and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) disciplines. Approximately 60 per cent of respondents were in their first two years of study, while around one third were in their third year, providing a strong overview of experiences from students in the early stages of university education.

For reporting purposes, participants have been anonymised and the following codes are used instead of names for the different stakeholder groups.

Code	Meaning
PM	Policymaker
INF	Policy influencer
COR	Corporate roundtable participant
YA	Young adult participant



3 Viet Nam's English as a second language strategy



Viet Nam is undergoing a broader social, economic and educational transition characterised by increasing internationalisation, economic development and educational reform.

Within this context, English is increasingly being positioned as a strategic resource that can support participation in education, employment and global engagement. The proposed English as a second language (ESL) strategy announced in October 2025 reflects these wider ambitions and represents an important next step in Viet Nam's evolving approach to English language education (Tran-Thanh, 2025; Vietnam Law & Legal Forum, 2025).

Viet Nam's new ESL strategy 2025–2035 sets out an ambitious vision for creating English-rich educational environments that support international integration, economic competitiveness and educational modernisation. The strategy represents a shift from simply wanting to improve English teaching to creating an educational ecosystem supported by English to achieve national ambitions.

This section provides an outline of the elements of the new ESL strategy relevant for this study. The information has been synthesised from the official Government of Vietnam strategy (Government of Vietnam, 2025), the analysis by Tran et al. (2024) and the Australian Council for Educational Research UK and British Council Viet Nam ELT development roadmap beyond 2025 report (Towne et al., 2025).



3.1 System implementation and governance

The ESL strategy adopts a structured approach to implementation, combining national direction with increasing institutional autonomy.

It outlines phased implementation across education sectors, with differentiated targets reflecting the needs of schools, vocational institutions and higher education providers.

Research and evidence are positioned as important mechanisms for informing policy development and implementation. The strategy also emphasises the need for effective communication and coordination among stakeholders to ensure shared understanding and commitment. Progress is expected to be supported through monitoring and evaluation systems, alongside incentives and recognition mechanisms designed to encourage participation, accountability and continuous improvement across the education system.





3.2 Teacher workforce transformation

The strategy places teacher development at the centre of English language education reform.

It promotes a comprehensive approach that spans pre-service preparation, ongoing professional development and strengthened recruitment standards. Emphasis is placed on improving teachers' English proficiency and expanding their capacity to use bilingual pedagogies, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches, and digital technologies. The strategy also encourages stronger partnerships between universities and schools to support professional learning and knowledge exchange. Recognising inequalities in educational provision, the strategy includes specific measures to strengthen teacher capacity and professional support in disadvantaged and remote areas, including targeted training in language proficiency, pedagogy and digital teaching skills, with priority support for teachers in rural contexts. These measures aim to promote more equitable access to quality English language education.

3.3 Curriculum and pedagogical innovation

The strategy signals a significant pedagogical shift from English as a foreign language (EFL) towards an ESL approach, with greater focus on meaningful language use across educational settings.

The strategy promotes integrated subject and language learning, including bilingual and English-medium educational methodologies. To achieve this, it proposes the review and revision of existing programmes and learning materials, alongside the development of new curriculum resources aligned with this direction. New approaches are expected to be piloted and evaluated before wider implementation. Beyond the classroom, it highlights the importance of creating everyday opportunities for learners to use English in authentic and purposeful contexts.



3.4 Assessment reform

The ESL strategy places considerable emphasis on assessment reform as part of broader efforts to improve English language education.

The strategy focuses particularly on strengthening national testing and assessment systems, including the development of proficiency frameworks, standardised assessment tools and technology-enabled testing, while recognising the need to accommodate different educational contexts and learner needs. Assessment is positioned not only as a measure of achievement but also as a tool for supporting learning and guiding instructional practice. Attention is given to the development of proficiency frameworks for higher education and the expansion of performance-based approaches, including project and portfolio assessment. The strategy also guides assessment in subjects taught through English and encourages the adoption of digital assessment systems and computer-based testing to support modernised evaluation practices.



3.5 Digital transformation and AI

Digital transformation is positioned as a core component of the strategy rather than a mechanism for supporting existing educational practices.

The strategy promotes the development and use of open educational resources and national digital learning platforms to expand access to English language learning opportunities. It also highlights the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to enable more personalised and adaptive learning experiences. Realising these ambitions will require sustained investment in technological infrastructure and collaboration with technology providers to drive innovation, scalability and the effective integration of digital tools into teaching and learning. Equally important is the development of teachers' digital capabilities so that they can make effective use of technology and AI in educational practice.



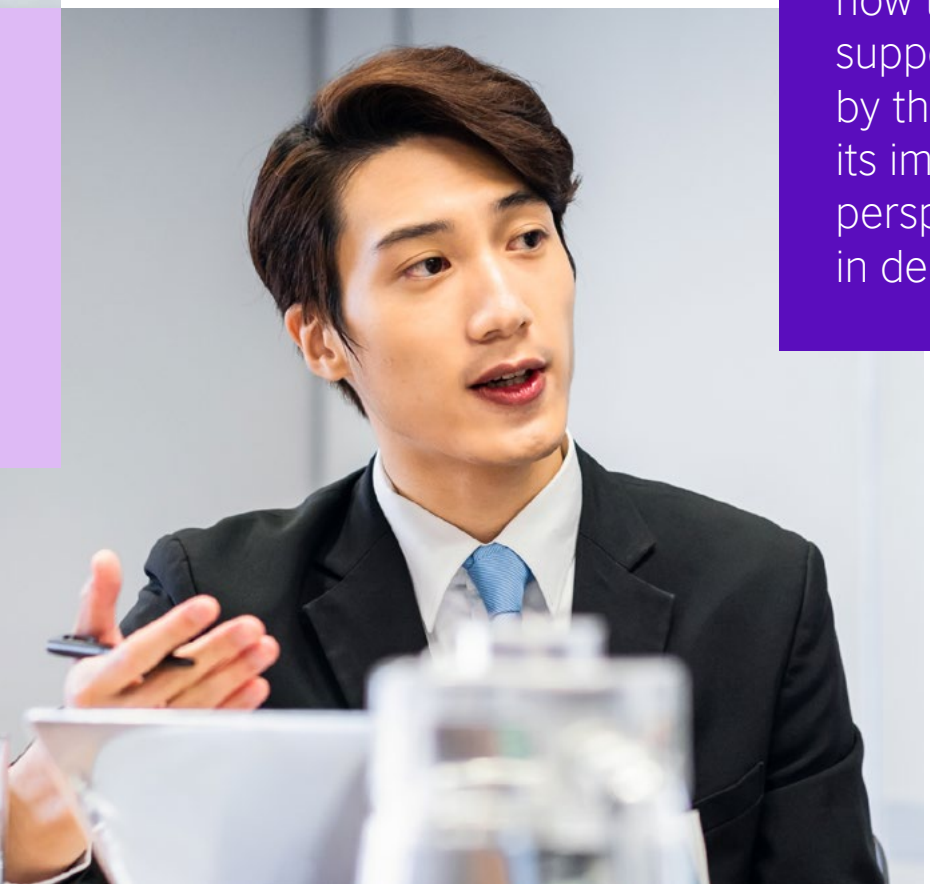


3.6 Partnerships, internationalisation and economic relevance

The strategy closely connects English language education with Viet Nam's broader goals for international engagement and economic development.

The strategy promotes partnerships with international organisations and educational institutions, including opportunities to learn from the experiences of other countries. It also encourages collaboration between the public and private sectors to support implementation and enhance the relevance of English language provision. Particular emphasis is placed on developing career-oriented learning environments that strengthen learners' ability to use English in professional contexts. English is positioned as a tool for employability, international communication and participation in an increasingly interconnected global economy.

Stakeholder perspectives collected through EVE provide an opportunity to examine how this vision is understood, supported and challenged by those responsible for its implementation. These perspectives are explored in depth in Section 4



4 English in transition: stakeholder perspectives



This section brings together perspectives from across the stakeholder groups to explore the evolving role of English in Viet Nam and the implications of the country's transition towards an ESL system.

The section begins by examining how English is increasingly being repositioned from a foreign language to a foundational capability that supports access to education, employment and global engagement (Section 4.1). It then considers stakeholder perspectives on the implementation of this transition, focusing on the relevance of English education to learners' needs, the challenges of translating policy ambitions into practice and persistent problems of unequal access and opportunity (Section 4.2). It concludes by exploring the opportunities and tensions that emerge as Viet Nam seeks to realise its ESL strategy. Taken together, these themes provide insight into both the potential and the complexities associated with this period of educational and linguistic transformation.

4.1 English as infrastructure: from foreign language to foundational capability

Generally, participants viewed English not simply as an important foreign language but as a form of social, educational and economic infrastructure underpinning Viet Nam's development ambitions.

English is seen as a strategic national asset that supports economic growth, international competitiveness, global engagement and participation in knowledge economies.

Several policymakers described a significant shift in the role of English within Vietnamese society. As one participant explained, ten years ago English was widely viewed as 'a precious opportunity to advance your study, advance your career' (PM03). Today, however, it has become 'the fundamental skill that you should have', with English increasingly seen as a prerequisite for participation in education and employment. The same participant argued, 'otherwise, you cannot do anything, you cannot function well within your study, within your work' (PM03). This perspective suggests a move beyond viewing English as an additional skill towards seeing it as an enabling infrastructure that supports access to opportunities across multiple domains.

Stakeholders consistently linked English to educational attainment and employability. Policymakers noted that earlier English language education reforms were motivated by concerns that many learners had studied English throughout their schooling and yet, upon graduation, 'couldn't use efficiently the language', despite 'an urgent need to use the language at work, in communication, in study' (PM01).

Participants also emphasised the continuing importance of English for accessing research, international engagement and employment opportunities. As one policymaker explained, 'almost all of the documents and almost all of the data, almost all the research' requires people to 'understand or can use English well' (PM02). Reflecting this widespread perception, another participant observed that 'if you have the university degree and you have good English, for sure you can get a job' (PM05).

Corporate stakeholders reinforced this conceptualisation of English. Rather than discussing English primarily as a school subject, they framed it as a capability that supports workforce development, international collaboration, business growth and organisational competitiveness. One participant explained that their company had 'officially … gone global' and therefore placed 'strong emphasis on English language, not only for the current human resources, but also human resources in the future' (COR3). The same participant described English as 'a key for our development' (COR3), while noting that in some business functions 'English requirements is compulsory' (COR3). Participants also linked English to career advancement and international mobility. As one stakeholder reflected, employees with stronger English skills are offered opportunities for overseas training and professional development, while those seeking 'the opportunity or the chance to be promoted' (COR2) must improve their English proficiency. Across the corporate data, English was presented as an enabling resource that allows individuals, organisations and the wider economy to connect with international markets, knowledge networks and opportunities.

Among young adults, English was overwhelmingly associated with opportunity, mobility and future success. Participants described English as important not only for career development but also for engaging with an increasingly interconnected world. As one participant explained, 'English is like a tool or a foundation that helps me achieve my goals' (YA03), while another noted that '[t]he economy is becoming increasingly globalised, and many foreign investors are investing in the Vietnamese market. Because of this, learning English is gradually becoming something of a necessity, almost a requirement, to access better career opportunities' (YA20). English is embedded throughout their daily lives, enabling access to social media, online learning platforms, gaming communities, international networks and emerging AI technologies. One student observed that 'most of the latest materials are in English' (YA04), highlighting the role of English in providing access to global knowledge, resources and expertise. These perspectives suggest that English remains relevant because it enables participation in educational, technological and professional domains rather than because it is mandated within formal education.

Policy influencers reinforced these perspectives by characterising English primarily as a tool for accessing knowledge and opportunity. One participant described English as 'very, very important as an instrument or a tool' (IN02), while another argued that citizens needed to master English so that they could 'learn faster and update faster' (IN03). Others linked English directly to regional integration, economic opportunity and national development. Reflecting on Viet Nam's engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and international markets, one participant noted that English was needed 'to do transactions with other neighbouring countries' and argued that Vietnamese workers would struggle 'to compete with other[s] from other countries if English continues to be used across the region as a working language' (IN04). In this sense, English was conceptualised less as an end and more as an enabling resource that supports participation in education, work, innovation and international engagement.

Aggregated, the findings appear to show that debates about whether English is important have largely been superseded in Viet Nam. Among participants there was broad agreement on the value of English and continued support for national English language ambitions. The more pressing question was how the education system can ensure that learners develop the levels of proficiency needed to benefit from the opportunities that English continues to provide. This shift in emphasis helps explain the growing focus on implementation, relevance and equity reflected both in stakeholder perspectives and in the 2025 ESL strategy (Government of Viet Nam, 2025).



4.2 Policy into practice: stakeholder perspectives

As well as supporting the new ESL strategy, informants identified areas where greater alignment across curriculum, delivery, assessment and standards may be required.

The considerations presented below are intended to support reflection on how implementation might be strengthened and then monitored and evaluated over time, recognising the opportunities, tensions and challenges associated with large-scale educational reform.

4.2.1 Relevance: aligning English education with real-life needs

> 'When people learn a language, I think the first result they usually want is to be able to speak it. The goal for most learners is: "After learning this language, I want to be able to communicate"' (YA19).

While stakeholders expressed strong consensus regarding the continuing importance of English, they also raised questions about whether current approaches to English language teaching remain fully aligned with contemporary educational, professional and social needs. The alignment of English language programmes with the real-life needs of students has been a topic of interest and discussion for scholars in Viet Nam and beyond (Erling & Seargeant, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2020; Pham, 2022). Alongside support for continued investment in English, there was growing recognition that English language education itself must evolve to ensure that learners develop the forms of proficiency required for contemporary study, work and participation in international society.

Rather than discussing English primarily as a school subject, corporate informants framed it as a capability that supports workforce development, international collaboration, business growth and organisational competitiveness. Participants repeatedly linked English to career progression, professional mobility and international engagement. One stakeholder described English as 'a key for our development' (CO3), while another stated simply that 'the English language is a must' (CO2). Across the corporate data, English was presented as an enabling resource that allows individuals, organisations and the wider economy to connect with international markets, knowledge networks and opportunities.

Young adults echoed this view. As one participant stated, 'English is not simply a school subject to me' (YA03); another reflected that 'learning English stopped being just another school subject for me' (YA19). For employment, English was increasingly viewed as one component of a broader portfolio of skills that includes digital literacy, adaptability, intercultural competence, AI readiness and lifelong learning. Reflecting a broader perception that English has become

a practical necessity rather than simply an academic subject, one young adult commented,

> ‘I study English mainly because it is necessary’ (YA08),

and another student commented on the benefits it can bring: ‘[t]he qualifications and work experience I’ve gained through English have given me a competitive advantage in the job market. For example, if two graduates come from the same university with similar qualifications, the person who has stronger English skills and more experience working with international colleagues is likely to have a competitive edge’ (YA19).

Several participants highlighted a perceived disconnect between educational outcomes and the communicative demands of study and work. Policymakers noted that English teaching can remain ‘a little bit separate from the industries’ (PM01), with some learners completing many years of study without developing the practical communication skills required in professional environments. One policymaker observed that despite many years of investment, some learners continue to study English throughout their schooling but still struggle to use it effectively for communication (PM05). The problem, therefore, was not whether people needed English but whether what is taught reflects the ways English is used.

Employers likewise pointed to gaps between educational provision and workplace needs, particularly in relation to communication, collaboration and real-world language use. Similar concerns emerged among policy influencers, who reported that traditional approaches to teaching remain widespread. One participant argued that ‘the whole system is still more like test-oriented teaching’ (IN02), while another noted a continuing emphasis on grammatical forms and vocabulary rather than task-based and communicative learning (IN01).

Young adults expressed comparable concerns. While they strongly valued English and associated it with future opportunities, many believed that school-based learning did not always prepare them for the English needed for further study, employment, digital participation and everyday communication. One participant argued that ‘many lessons still focus heavily on exams, grades, and grammar’ (YA18) and that schools should create a better balance between grammar instruction and the development of broader language skills. Another asserted that language teaching ‘focuses too much on theory’ (YA02), with students often being required to memorise vocabulary rather than apply it in ‘real-life situations’. Related concerns emerged elsewhere in the focus groups. One participant proposed that ‘teachers could spend less time on grammar and devote more time to communication’ (YA15), while another argued that ‘there should be much more communication practice’ (YA12). Participants frequently expressed a



desire for more authentic, communicative and practical opportunities to use English, with one learner opining that 'the lessons should be more closely connected to real life' (YA05).

Stakeholders also suggested that English provision may need to become more responsive to learners' differing goals and circumstances. One policy influencer argued that language education should be informed by a better understanding of the 'real need from the school, from the student, and from the society' (IN07). The same participant questioned whether all learners should follow identical pathways, proposing that provision might be differentiated according to learners' needs and aspirations.

Relatedly, several participants emphasised the importance of enabling meaningful use of English beyond the classroom, such as one influencer, who argued that 'we need to build a context, an environment where people have the need to use English' (IN04). Corporate stakeholders highlighted a complementary implementation challenge: that language proficiency depends not only on learning but also on regular practice and meaningful application. Several stakeholders observed that graduates often stop using English once they enter workplaces where it is not required, resulting in proficiency declining over time. From this perspective, successful implementation extends beyond schools and universities to professional and social environments where English is used purposefully and consistently. This reveals a broader shift in thinking about relevance, from focusing primarily on curriculum content towards considering how learners engage with English across educational, professional and social contexts.

In summary, the findings suggest that one of the challenges facing English language education in Viet Nam is ensuring that it remains aligned with the ways English is used in contemporary society and with the aspirations of learners, employers and communities. Participants stressed the importance of communicative competence, authentic language use and opportunities to apply English in meaningful contexts. This pivot is reflected in the 2025 ESL strategy's focus on curriculum reform, communicative competence and stronger connections between education, employment and lifelong learning. The ESL strategy signals ambitious changes in the role and positioning of English across the education system. However, at the time of writing, the relationship between these ambitions and the existing General Education Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018) remains an area that will require further clarification as implementation progresses.



Successful implementation extends beyond schools and universities to professional and social environments where English is used purposefully and consistently.



4.2.2 Implementation: translating ambition into practice

The data indicates that the challenge is no longer setting ambitions for English language education; rather it is delivering high-quality learning experiences and equitable provision at scale across different educational settings and regions.

Some progress has already been made. For example, several participants reflected on the significant impact of successive phases of English language reform in Viet Nam. These include the National Foreign Languages Project 2020 and the introduction of the 2018 General Education Curriculum, which spans curriculum, assessment and language education policy (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018; Van Van, 2022) and has recently culminated in preparations for the implementation of the ESL strategy. Policymakers described a range of implementation structures designed to support delivery, monitoring and accountability. One participant explained that implementation is supported through a project management system that collects information from 'all the provinces, all the schools, universities, ministries' and evaluates progress against government objectives (PM01). They also noted that reviews draw on multiple sources of evidence, including reports from across the education system and, in some cases, 'independent evaluators' and specialists who assess the effectiveness and impact of key activities (PM01).

Others emphasised that implementation should not be viewed as a single event but as a continuous cycle of monitoring, review and adaptation. The same policymaker explained that reform efforts are periodically reviewed using implementation data and stakeholder feedback, leading to adjustments where necessary. Reflecting on earlier phases of English language reform, the participant noted that 'we saw the need to amend some of the contents' based on evidence gathered from across the system (PM01). Another participant stressed that long-term reform requires flexibility, arguing that while the overall direction may remain constant, implementation can be adjusted in response to changing conditions: 'you can change the route' and 'you can change the speed as well' if circumstances require it (PM03).

The policy–practice gap

However, a recurring theme was the gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities.

One participant remarked that 'ambitions is always something over the reality' (IN04), reflecting wider concerns about the challenges of translating reform intentions into practice. These challenges relate to serving diverse contexts where demands and needs differ; to ensuring the necessary infrastructure and resources to enable the same learning opportunities for all; and, importantly, to classroom practice and experience.

There were several areas to do with the teacher workforce that concerned participants. Teacher capacity was also identified as a critical implementation challenge. Several stakeholders noted ongoing difficulties in ensuring that teachers have the language proficiency, pedagogical skills and support required to deliver increasingly ambitious programmes. Concerns were particularly evident in discussions of English medium instruction (EMI). One participant observed that many teachers were worried about teaching subject content through English because 'the teacher themselves do not understand the concept in English well' (IN03). Similar concerns emerged from implementation experiences at provincial level. Reflecting on efforts to expand EMI, another participant explained that schools received 'a lot of complaints' from teachers who felt that they did 'not have enough ability in English to carry out the lesson' (IN07). Challenges were also evident in teacher proficiency assessment. One policy influencer noted that, following intensive language training, 'only 60 to 70 per cent of the teachers' achieved the expected competency level (IN07), suggesting that teacher language proficiency may continue to constrain implementation in some contexts.

Another concern was classroom focus and methodology. One participant commented that teachers continue to concentrate heavily on grammatical forms and vocabulary rather than task-based and communicative learning (IN01). Young adults echoed this opinion, frequently criticising grammar-heavy and examination-oriented teaching and arguing that these approaches did not always prepare learners for real-world communication. One participant said, 'I think that instead of repeatedly teaching grammar, teachers could spend less time on grammar and devote more time to communication and interactive English activities' (YA 15), while another asserted that 'there should be much more communication practice' (YA12). Participants highlighted the need for more authentic and practical learning experiences. As one student explained, '[t]he lessons should be more closely connected to real life' (YA05). These comments question whether educational approaches effectively support communicative competence and meaningful use.

Participants underlined tensions between curriculum goals and assessment systems, noting that although English programmes are intended to develop learners' abilities across all four language skills, national examinations continue to prioritise reading comprehension. This was widely seen as creating incentives for teaching approaches that do not always align with broader communicative objectives. One young adult commented, '[i]n public schools, many lessons still focus heavily on exams, grades and grammar. I think public schools should create a better balance between grammar instruction and developing the other four language skills' (YA18). This points to misalignment between curriculum intentions and classroom practice, and a lack of meaningful integration of assessment into teaching and learning. In one influencer's opinion, 'the whole system is still more like test-oriented teaching' (IN02).

In education systems, teachers are the main agents through whom policy becomes practice (Brown et al., 2021; Fullan, 1993). Reassuringly, Viet Nam's ESL strategy recognises this by prioritising teacher education and development. Yet professional learning alone is insufficient. Teachers also need ongoing professional and pastoral support as they navigate the demands of curriculum reform (see Section 3.2),

changing pedagogies and rising expectations. Their willingness and capacity to engage with change will play a decisive role in shaping learners' experiences and outcomes (Fullan, 1993, 2015). As UNESCO (2014) reminds us, '[a]n education system is only as good as its teachers. Unlocking their potential is essential to enhancing the quality of learning' (p. 3).

Importantly, stakeholders emphasised that implementation challenges are not experienced uniformly across the country. Participants repeatedly highlighted the need for flexibility in responding to local contexts and regional differences, with one influencer observing that 'we have to be very flexible in different regions' (IN04). This reflects a broader recognition that policies may need to be adapted to differing levels of infrastructure, teacher capacity and learner need if reforms are to achieve equitable outcomes nationwide. Technology and artificial intelligence in supporting reform implementation

Technology and artificial intelligence in supporting reform implementation

Policymakers, influencers and young adults generally viewed technology as important in enabling language learning and access to knowledge, supporting teachers and learners, and improving education outcomes. Notably, stakeholders did not see AI as reducing the importance of English.

Participants described AI and digital technologies as expanding opportunities for learners to access resources, personalise learning and overcome barriers to information. At the same time, stakeholders consistently contended that English remains highly valuable because much of the world's knowledge infrastructure, technical documentation and digital content continues to be produced and accessed through English. As one young adult explained, when using AI or searching for information, 'communicating with AI in English … provides more comprehensive results' because there are 'more resources, more documents and more sources available' (YA19). This view was corroborated by another student: '[t]he subjects we study are quite specialised, so there aren't many Vietnamese materials that are useful for our courses. As a result, we mainly must use and search for resources in English' (YA15). Another young adult reported, '[m]ost of the materials taught at university, as well as the resources available online, are in English. I would say that around 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the materials I use are in English' (YA17). Similarly, an influencer noted that English has become increasingly important because people seek 'access to the information from all over the world in order to enrich themselves, to keep them informed and to debate' (IN04).

Participants suggested that technological developments may reinforce rather than diminish the value of English. A policymaker observed that while AI-supported learning platforms are becoming increasingly common, they should be seen as 'a complement but not a replacement' for language learning and face-to-face interaction (PM04). This perspective was echoed by young adults, who viewed AI as a tool for finding information, refining ideas and supporting communication but not as something capable of replacing genuine language competence. Young adults tended to agree with this perspective, as the following quotes show.

> 'Communication involves interaction, emotions and human connection. If everything were replaced entirely by AI, conversations would become quite rigid and unnatural' (YA18).

> ‘Learning another language isn’t only about communication. It’s also about understanding another country’s culture’ (YA15).

Participants argued that language learning develops abilities that extend beyond basic communication, including critical thinking, analysis, intercultural understanding and the capacity to engage with different perspectives. As one influencer reflected, learning English is not simply about conversational ability but about using language to ‘analyse, synthesise, compare and contrast, to debate, to defend your own voice, and to understand yourself’ (IN04).

Participants also drew attention to the growing role of what might be considered an informal curriculum, whereby young adults use digital technologies independently to supplement and extend formal education. Many described using social media, online platforms, AI tools and digital resources outside school and university to access information, develop language skills and engage with global content. For these learners, English often functions as a gateway to wider knowledge networks, enabling them to pursue interests, access specialised resources and participate in international communities beyond the classroom. This suggests that future approaches to English education may need to recognise and build upon the increasingly blurred boundaries between formal learning and self-directed learning in digital environments.

At the same time, participants cautioned that the benefits of technology are not evenly distributed. While AI and digital learning offer significant opportunities, stakeholders noted the financial and infrastructural challenges associated with providing equitable access at scale. As a result, technological innovation may risk reinforcing existing educational inequalities if access to English learning provision remains uneven. This concern leads to a broader challenge identified across the data: unequal access and opportunity (see Section 4.2.3).

Overall, the findings indicate that implementation is a central concern within Viet Nam’s English language reform agenda. Stakeholders broadly agreed on the goals of reform and the continuing importance of English but highlighted the considerable complexity of delivering these ambitions consistently across diverse educational contexts. Questions therefore emerge about the policy–practice gap, teacher capacity, assessment, monitoring, flexibility and technological support, all of which are critical considerations for the successful implementation of the 2025 ESL strategy.



4.2.3 Unequal access and opportunity

Despite widespread agreement on the value of English, stakeholders consistently voiced concerns about unequal access to English learning and to the opportunities that English can create.

While substantial progress has been made in expanding English language education across Viet Nam, participants believed that its benefits remain unevenly distributed across regions, communities and social groups. As a result, equity emerged not only as a question of language education but also, more broadly, as one of opportunity and social mobility.

Many policymakers identified persistent disparities between urban and rural contexts. Participants noted that learners in major cities often have access to a wider range of educational resources, private language provision and opportunities to use English, while learners in less advantaged areas may face greater constraints. One participant highlighted 'a very, very big dispersion in terms of resources, and the level of access to resources' between urban and rural areas (PM03). Similar concerns were expressed by another policymaker, who observed that in some locations students can invest heavily in English learning and 'become very good in English', while in other areas 'it is like … nothing' (PM05). These reflections suggest that opportunities to access high-quality English learning remain unevenly distributed across the country.

Stakeholders frequently linked these disparities to wider differences in educational and economic opportunity. One policymaker argued that access to English was connected to wider goals of equity because policymakers wanted to 'bring the opportunity for everyone' (PM05). However, the same participant noted that 'if the kids [do not] have the access to the English, they will be very limited of their access for the high-quality resource of the books, of the material or whatever it is' (PM05). From this perspective, unequal access to English has implications that extend beyond language learning itself, influencing access to knowledge, further education and future employment.

Several participants pointed to significant variation in the resources available to learners across different contexts. As one policymaker commented, '[i]n some of the area, the student study, spend a lot of money to study English. They become very good in English, much, much better. But in some area, it is like, I mean, it is nothing, you know, so it is something that we really need to consider' (PM05). This contrast exposes disparities in access to English learning, with some learners benefiting from substantial investment and support while others have far fewer chances to develop proficiency. Such observations suggest that participation in English education alone does not necessarily guarantee equal opportunities to benefit from it.

Policy influencers echoed these concerns. One participant stated simply that 'the inequality is still there' (IN01), pointing out continuing differences between learners in major urban centres and those in mountainous or remote regions. Others indicated that the benefits of English language reform have been 'highly unevenly distributed' (IN02). Participants frequently described a situation in which location and socio-economic circumstances produce considerable variation in access to resources, teaching quality, exposure to English and opportunities for meaningful use.

Importantly, stakeholders also mentioned differences in the perceived value of English across contexts. Several participants explained that young people in major cities are often strongly motivated to develop English because they see clear connections to educational and employment opportunities, whereas learners in some rural areas may find English less immediately relevant to their daily lives. One participant asserted that 'people in the big city, then they are very excited and they equip themselves with English, but if the student come from small school from the countryside, they

don't find it necessary to learn English … because they themselves never use English in their life' (IN03). Similarly, another stakeholder noted that 'people in the city or in the town… know that this is very important but in some remote area … because there is no chance with English … most of them, they don't pay attention too much in English' (IN06). These insights imply that motivation to learn English is shaped not only by national policy ambitions but also by learners' perceptions of the opportunities and practical value that English offers in their local contexts.

Urban families were described as making significant investments in English learning, while some remote communities may place less emphasis on English because the benefits appear more distant or less visible. This points to an additional dimension of inequality: differences not only in access to English provision but also in the extent to which individuals are able to recognise and benefit from the opportunities that English can offer.

Some participants expressed concern that these disparities could become more pronounced in the future. One policy influencer suggested that divisions between different groups of learners may be widening rather than narrowing (IN04), particularly as access to educational technologies, digital resources and additional learning opportunities remains uneven. Another participant noted that 'the access to these resources is different' (IN04), highlighting the interconnected nature of language learning, technology and educational opportunity. These observations indicate that inequalities in English learning may be reinforced by wider differences in access to educational resources, technology and opportunities for language use.

At the same time, stakeholders demonstrated a strong commitment to overcoming these challenges. Policymakers repeatedly referenced the importance of equity and access as central objectives for future reform (PM05, PM02). However, the findings suggest that ensuring equitable outcomes remains a complex implementation challenge. Expanding access to English learning is only one part of the problem; ensuring that learners from different regions and backgrounds can develop sufficient proficiency to benefit from the opportunities associated with English may prove equally important.

Corporate stakeholders echoed concerns regarding unequal access to English learning opportunities. Participants identified disparities associated with school type, family income and geographical location, noting that learners attending international or elite institutions are often significantly better placed to develop English proficiency than their peers elsewhere. Some stakeholders expressed concern that the increasing cost of private English education may widen existing inequalities, while others pointed to persistent differences between major urban centres and more remote regions. These insights reinforce the view that access to high-quality English learning remains closely linked to broader patterns of educational and social advantage.

Overall, the findings indicate that equity remains one of the most significant challenges facing English language education in Viet Nam. While English is widely viewed as an important enabler of educational and economic opportunity, stakeholders recognised that not all learners are currently in an equal position to access, use or benefit from English. Resolving these disparities therefore appears central to the long-term success of the 2025 ESL strategy and its broader ambition to support inclusive national development.



4.2.4 Opportunities and tensions in the evolving ESL landscape

While stakeholders identified a range of important developments that have strengthened English language education in Viet Nam, they also highlighted several tensions that may influence the extent to which this potential can be realised. Rather than representing contradictions, these tensions reflect the challenges of implementing ambitious reforms within a complex and rapidly changing educational environment.

Across the data, participants described a series of opportunities that have emerged through Viet Nam's continued investment in English language education. Stakeholders drew attention to a growing demand for English, ambitious plans for expanding English language education and EMI, increasing emphasis on communicative competence, new possibilities associated with technology and AI, and wider processes of internationalisation. Collectively, these developments were viewed as important enablers of individual advancement, workforce development and national competitiveness.

At the same time, participants consistently identified tensions that may influence how far these opportunities can be realised in practice. Recognition of the growing demand for English was accompanied by concerns about unequal access to learning. Ambitions for expanded ESL and EMI provision raised questions about teacher preparedness and capacity. Efforts to promote communicative approaches were often perceived to be constrained by examination-oriented assessment systems, while the increasing importance of digital technologies and AI was seen as perpetuating digital divides. Similarly, participants acknowledged that aspirations for greater internationalisation exposed continuing disparities between urban and rural contexts, recognising that national policy ambitions were frequently accompanied by implementation challenges across diverse educational settings. Looking ahead, the findings point to the importance of considering English within an increasingly multilingual landscape. Participants generally viewed English not as a replacement for Vietnamese or other languages but as an additional resource that expands access to education, information, employment and international engagement. As Viet Nam becomes more globally connected, there may be value in exploring how English language education can support broader multilingual competencies and enable learners to navigate diverse linguistic environments. Taken together, these findings suggest that the future development of English language education in Viet Nam will depend not only on expanding opportunities but also on tackling the interconnected inequalities and implementation challenges that continue to shape learners' experiences.





5 Building a coherent and integrated system

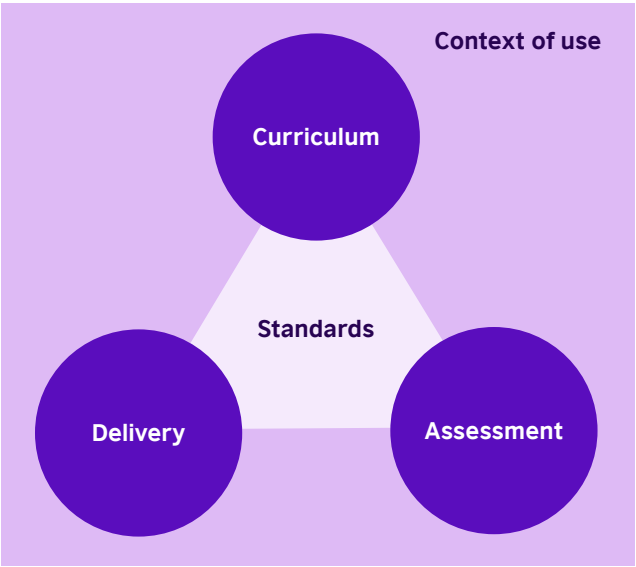


A major ambition of Viet Nam's ESL strategy is alignment across the education system.

This includes alignment both across educational stages and within the system itself, ensuring that curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, and quality assurance mechanisms work together to support intended learning outcomes. (See Section 6 for more information on proposed monitoring mechanisms for Viet Nam's ESL strategy.)

This is where the Comprehensive Learning System (CLS) (O'Sullivan, 2021) becomes relevant. The CLS is based on the premise that any learning system comprises four interconnected components: curriculum, delivery, assessment and standards. These components do not operate in isolation but within a broader context of use, shaped by the values, beliefs and stakeholders that inhabit the context.

Figure 3 | **The Comprehensive Learning System (O'Sullivan, 2021)**



For a learning system to function effectively, these four components need to be aligned. Where there is misalignment, or where one component is not working as well as the others, the effectiveness of the system may be reduced and learner outcomes affected. The CLS can be used both as an analytical framework for understanding existing systems (Patel & Halley, 2026) and as a tool to support educational reform.

Drawing on stakeholder perspectives, the interview data provides insight into how the current English language learning system in Viet Nam is perceived and where strengths and tensions exist within the four CLS components (Table 2).

Stakeholders consistently identified a context in which demand for English continues to grow, driven by aspirations for educational opportunity, employment and international engagement. Within this context, however, participants also identified areas of misalignment across curriculum, delivery, assessment and implementation. The ESL strategy can be understood as an attempt to respond to these tensions and strengthen alignment across the learning system.

Across the interviews, stakeholders described a sustained effort to modernise English language education through reforms to curriculum, delivery, assessment and quality assurance. Curriculum reform has moved away from knowledge-based instruction towards communicative competence and practical language use, while the recent ESL strategy seeks to strengthen connections between school learning, higher education and future employment. Participants recognised the growing role of technology and AI in shaping delivery models, although teachers remain central to successful implementation. Assessment reforms have broadened beyond traditional examination systems and are increasingly linked to wider policy monitoring processes. More broadly, interviewees portrayed Viet Nam's approach to English language teaching and education as characterised by long-term planning, regular review and adaptation. This is despite some participants questioning whether the available data is sufficient to support robust evaluation and evidence-informed decision-making.

There is evidence within the data from this research of both existing foundations and

future aspirations across each CLS component. However, the effectiveness of the ESL strategy will depend on strengthening not only individual components but also the alignment between them. A systems perspective highlights the interdependence of the CLS components: changes in one area are likely to require corresponding adjustments in others to maintain alignment and coherence across the system.

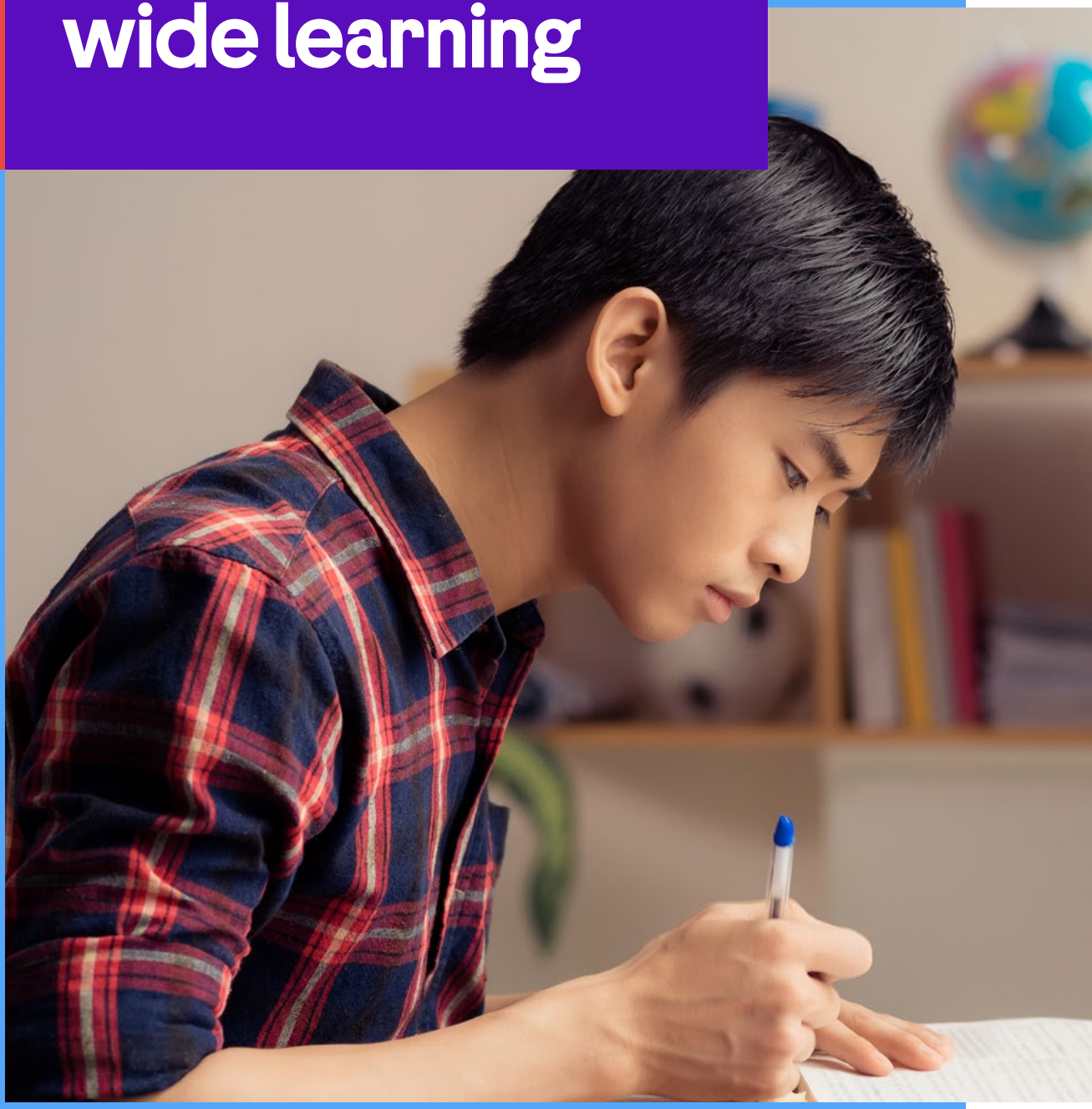
While stakeholders demonstrated a strong understanding of individual aspects of reform, the relationships between these components were not always explicitly articulated. Supporting implementation may therefore require making these connections more visible. For example, formative assessment practices can reinforce communicative curriculum objectives, while monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes can provide evidence that informs teacher support and future policy development. Viewed in this way, the ESL strategy represents not simply a set of discrete reforms but an opportunity to strengthen coherence across the English language learning system.

Table 2 | **Insights from Stakeholders on English Education in Viet Nam**

CLS component	Stakeholder perceptions	Implementation priorities
Context of use	• Strong societal demand for English • English linked to internationalisation and economic development • English viewed as a tool for opportunity	• Ensuring equitable access and opportunity • Strengthening teacher capacity
Curriculum	• More communicative orientation • EFL to ESL transition underway	• Maintaining alignment with real-world needs
Delivery	• Ambitions for technology-enhanced learning • Informal, digital and AI-enabled learning increasingly important	• Addressing urban–rural disparities • Enhancing teacher preparedness (language proficiency and pedagogical practice)
Assessment	• Shift in focus towards communicative and competency-based outcomes	• Balancing traditional assessment priorities with communicative competencies • Aligning assessment practices with communicative goals
Standards and monitoring	• Long-term planning and review • Piloting before scaling • Variable implementation across contexts	• Embedding MEL processes to support continuous improvement



6 Supporting implementation through system-wide learning





Viet Nam is entering an important period of educational transition. The proposed ESL strategy reflects a broader vision for national development, international engagement and educational reform as well as responding to the aspirations of individual learners, families and communities.

Stakeholders broadly viewed the strategy as both timely and ambitious, recognising its potential to strengthen English language education while acknowledging the scale of change required to achieve its objectives.

As with any large-scale language reform, successful implementation will depend not only on policy design but also on the systems used to monitor progress, evaluate impact and support continuous improvement.

The ESL strategy already establishes an important foundation for monitoring implementation through its system of mandatory standards and evaluation criteria. These standards provide a structured mechanism for assessing progress across the principal dimensions of the English language ecosystem, including language environment and communication; educational programmes and teaching activities; learning materials and digital technologies; teachers and learners; international cooperation; support and administrative services; and science and technology. Applied across different educational levels and linked to phased targets, the standards offer a valuable framework for accountability and performance monitoring. Their implementation will be pivotal in evidencing the extent to which educational institutions are progressing towards the strategy's vision and objectives.

The seven standards focus primarily on the conditions, resources and capacities required to support the implementation of the strategy. As such, they constitute a basis for determining whether the fundamental components of the system are in place and functioning as intended. Yet while these standards provide an important mechanism for assessing progress and achievement, they are less explicitly designed to explain how change occurs across the system or why implementation may vary between contexts. A complementary MEL approach could help answer these questions by generating evidence about system processes, relationships and conditions that support or constrain reform.

During periods of system-wide reform, MEL processes can support implementation by generating evidence for decision making, identifying areas requiring additional support and promoting continuous improvement (World Bank, 2026). Establishing robust baseline evidence is a crucial part of this process as it provides a point of reference from which the implementation and impact of reform can be monitored over time (Chaplowe, 2013).

The findings from this study suggest that the current moment presents a valuable opportunity to establish a baseline against which future developments can be tracked and understood. One possible approach would be to develop an integrated systems-informed MEL framework to support the implementation of the ESL strategy.

Such a framework would move beyond measuring outcomes alone and instead seek to understand how different elements of the education system interact to support or constrain change. The findings from this study indicate that the effectiveness of the ESL strategy will depend not only on individual interventions but also on the degree of alignment between curriculum, delivery, assessment, standards and the wider context in which learning takes place. A phased approach could be particularly valuable, as Figure 4 demonstrates.

Figure 4 | **An integrated systems-informed Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework for English language education**



Stage 1: Baseline

The initial phase would involve establishing a baseline understanding of the English language learning system at each educational stage. Separate profiles could be developed for primary, secondary and higher education, documenting its main features – that is, curriculum, delivery, assessment, standards and context of use. A combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators could be collected, including information about students, teachers, schools, learning resources, qualifications, assessment systems and educational provision. Such data would create a comprehensive picture of the system at the beginning of implementation and provide a foundation for future comparison.

Stage 2: Monitoring

The second phase would focus on tracking change over time. Key indicators could be identified and collected longitudinally, enabling policymakers and educational leaders to monitor progress towards the goals of the ESL strategy. This would provide evidence of how the reforms are being enacted in practice, while also revealing strengths, emerging challenges and areas requiring additional support. Given the scale of the proposed reforms, the approach could initially be piloted in a small number of geographically and socio-economically diverse provinces or regions. It could then be refined and scaled more widely.

Stage 3: Learning and improvement

The final phase would move beyond monitoring to support continuous learning and system improvement. While quantitative indicators can provide evidence of change, they cannot fully explain how or why change is occurring. A systems-informed approach, such as the CLS, would therefore also examine relationships between elements of the education system. In doing so, it would identify areas of alignment and misalignment and the factors leading to this (Patel & Halley, 2026). For example, do curriculum ambitions align with classroom realities? Are teachers adequately prepared to deliver the curriculum? Does pre-service and in-service teacher education support the goals of the reform? Are assessment practices aligned with intended learning outcomes? Exploring such questions would provide valuable evidence to inform ongoing refinement of policy and practice.

Importantly, this approach also highlights the role of the wider context of use. Across the interviews, stakeholders described an aspiration for an increasingly English-rich environment extending beyond formal education into communities, workplaces, homes and digital spaces. Achieving this vision will require collective engagement from a broad range of stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, institutions, employers, learners and wider society. In this sense, successful implementation of the ESL strategy extends beyond educational reform: it also calls for the development of a supportive ecosystem in which English can be used meaningfully and authentically.

Such a framework might draw on principles reflected in the CLS and broader systems thinking approaches (e.g. OECD, 2017; UNICEF, 2025), foregrounding relationships between educational components, stages and contexts. In doing so, it could support not only the monitoring of implementation outcomes but also a deeper understanding of how different parts of the system interact to enable or constrain educational change. This framework is intended to complement the ESL strategy's existing monitoring plans by providing a mechanism for understanding how and why change is occurring across different contexts.

Taken together, this three-stage approach offers a way to measure progress towards Viet Nam's ESL ambitions while also illuminating how the system evolves over time. Further exploration would be required to determine its feasibility and design. However, an integrated systems-informed MEL framework may provide a useful mechanism for supporting accountability, continuous learning and ongoing improvement throughout the ESL strategy's implementation.

7 Findings in relation to the research questions



This study forms part of Phase 1 of the EVE project.

Before investigating the potential economic impact of English, it was necessary to understand the policy context in which English language education operates, the factors shaping demand for English and stakeholder perspectives on implementation and impact.



Drawing on evidence from across the study, this section synthesises the main findings in relation to the four research questions that guided the research. It thus lays the foundation for future work in Phase 2 of the EVE project.

7.1 RQ1

Why and when do governments invest in English?

The findings suggest that government investment in English language education in Viet Nam has been driven by a combination of economic, educational and internationalisation objectives. Policymakers described English as increasingly important following Viet Nam's integration into the global economy during the 1990s and 2000s. As the country sought to expand international trade, attract investment and strengthen its global competitiveness, English was viewed as enabling participation and supporting national development ambitions.

Participants also highlighted educational and social motivations for investment. English was frequently associated with access to higher education, international study opportunities, employment and professional advancement. Several policymakers noted that English provides access to knowledge, research and learning resources that may not be readily available in Vietnamese. Others emphasised the importance of ensuring equitable access to these provisions across the population. Investment in English was therefore framed not only as an economic priority but also as a means of expanding educational opportunity and supporting social mobility.

The findings further indicate that investment in English reflects both government priorities and strong societal demand. Policymakers reported that students, families and employers generally regard English as valuable for future educational and career opportunities. This has created broad support for continued investment in English language education.

These long-term economic, educational and internationalisation drivers appear to have culminated in the launch of the ESL strategy in October 2025, shortly before data collection for EVE commenced. The strategy reflects a renewed and system-wide commitment to strengthening English language education. It also suggests that English is increasingly viewed not simply as a curriculum subject but as a strategic capability supporting Viet Nam's broader social, educational and economic development ambitions.



7.2 RQ2

To what extent do governments measure the impact of English language-in-education policies?

According to the findings of this study, some forms of monitoring and measurement are undertaken within the English language education system.

However, these activities are neither systematic nor consistently integrated into policy implementation processes. Participants described the collection of various forms of data but provided limited evidence of its use in informing decision making, identifying implementation challenges or supporting continuous improvement.

The study did not identify a clear or consistent set of key performance indicators used across the system. As a result, it is difficult to assess the extent to which progress towards policy objectives is routinely measured or evaluated. Overall, the findings indicate that measurement exists in a fragmented rather than strategic form. If the ESL strategy is to achieve its ambitions, it will be essential to integrate MEL more strongly into implementation planning and delivery. This would provide a clearer evidence base for tracking progress, identifying areas for improvement and adapting implementation approaches over time.



7.3 RQ3

Do English language-in-education policies contribute to economic growth and impact?



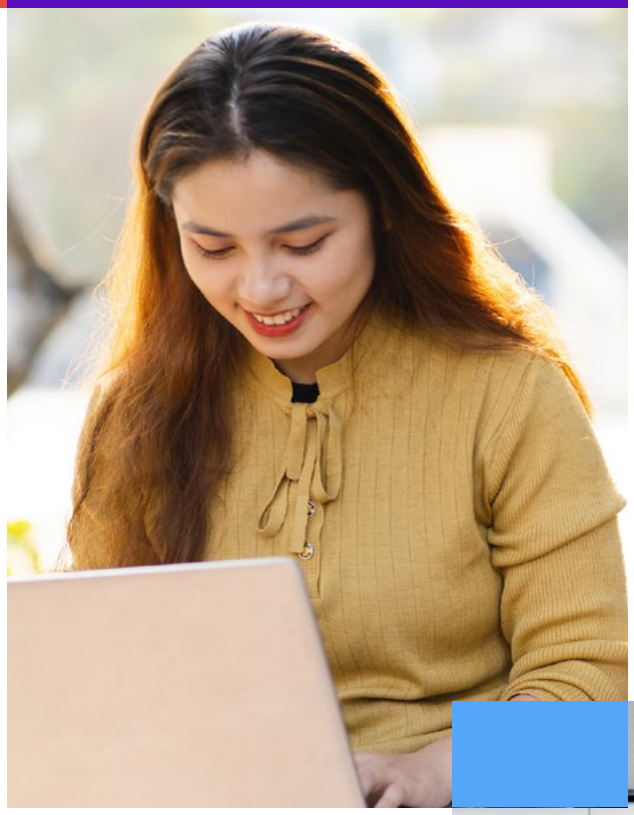
Participants across stakeholder groups generally perceived English as contributing positively to economic development. English was frequently associated with improved educational outcomes, access to employment opportunities, workforce competitiveness and international engagement. These benefits were mentioned most frequently at the individual level, where English was seen as supporting educational progression and career advancement.

Policy stakeholders and representatives from the corporate sector also viewed English as contributing to wider economic growth and national competitiveness. However, these claims were largely based on professional experience and perception rather than on robust empirical evidence. The study did not identify quantitative data capable of demonstrating causal links between English language education policies and economic outcomes. This important evidence gap reinforces the rationale for Phase 2 of the EVE project, which seeks to gather data and develop methodologies to examine the economic value of English more systematically. Viet Nam's new ESL strategy, with its emphasis on system-wide reform and future monitoring arrangements, provides a promising platform for such work.

7.4 RQ4

What is the role of English (and other languages) in helping young people to achieve their ambitions?

The findings illustrate the important role that English plays in supporting young people's personal, educational and professional aspirations.



Young adults consistently described English as a gateway to educational resources, international networks, online communities and opportunities for further learning. Participants viewed English proficiency as increasingly important for accessing higher education, improving employability and participating in a globalised economy.

At the same time, young people recognised that English is not the only language of value. Participants stressed the importance of other languages, particularly where these align with Viet Nam's economic priorities and international partnerships. Languages such as Chinese, Japanese and German were identified as potentially valuable for employment and career development in specific sectors and industries. Participants also emphasised the need to preserve the Vietnamese language and cultural identity, viewing multilingualism not as a replacement for Vietnamese but as a means of expanding educational, professional and intercultural opportunities. The findings therefore suggest that while English is pivotal in supporting young people's ambitions, multilingual capabilities may provide additional advantages depending on individual goals and labour market demands.





8 Conclusion

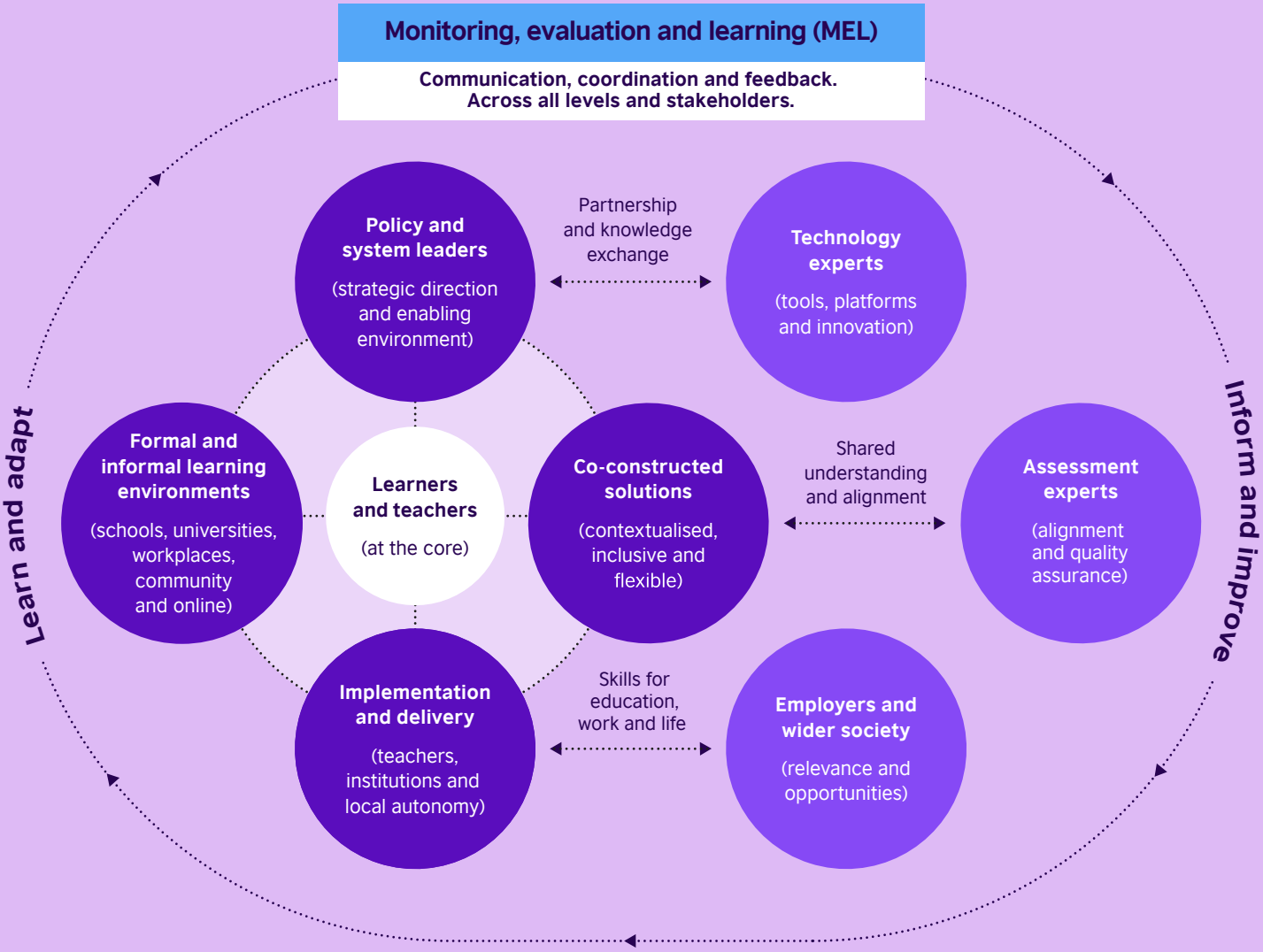


Viet Nam is in transition from a system in which English is primarily taught as a foreign language towards one in which it is increasingly positioned as a strategic capability. The ESL strategy is the clearest expression of that transition to date.

The findings of this study show that the role and status of English is undergoing a significant transition within education and society in Viet Nam. Across stakeholder groups, English was increasingly viewed not simply as a foreign language subject but as a strategic capability supporting participation in education, employment and global engagement. Participants linked the growing importance of English to broader processes of internationalisation, economic development and educational reform – processes which have contributed to successive phases of language-in-education reform and culminated most recently in the introduction of the ESL strategy. The findings indicate that the strategy represents both a continuation of this longer-term trajectory and an important opportunity to strengthen English language education in Viet Nam.

The findings imply that developing English language education in Viet Nam may be most effectively understood as a system-wide endeavour rather than the responsibility of any single institution or stakeholder group. As illustrated in Figure 5, achieving the ambitions of Viet Nam's ESL strategy requires collaboration and coordination across multiple domains – including schools, higher education, workplaces, families, communities and technology providers – with efforts aligned towards shared goals. At the same time, the system must remain responsive to diverse local contexts.

Figure 5 | **A potential educational ecosystem for Viet Nam**



The System

A collaborative, learning-centred and adaptive ecosystem for english language education in Viet Nam.

Participants consistently highlighted variations in opportunities, resources, infrastructure and the perceived value of English across different regions. This suggests that flexibility, local decision making and teacher and institutional autonomy will be critical to successful implementation. Central to this model are learners and teachers, whose experiences ultimately determine whether policy ambitions translate into meaningful educational outcomes. This reinforces the importance of aligning curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and learning resources within a coherent system that supports high-quality learning across formal and informal learning environments. The findings further indicate that learning increasingly occurs through participation in a broader educational ecosystem that extends beyond schools and universities – one that includes workplaces, communities, digital environments and self-directed learning. Effective and sustainable implementation therefore depends on solutions being co-constructed between different stakeholders, drawing on expertise from education, assessment, technology, employers and local communities. Effective communication

and feedback across all levels of the system are equally important, enabling stakeholders to respond to changing needs and emerging opportunities. Finally, the findings emphasise the importance of ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning, not only to track progress towards strategic objectives but also to support reflection, adaptation and continuous improvement.

A possible framework for supporting this process is outlined in Section 6. In this way, English language education can evolve alongside the social, economic and technological contexts in which English is learned and used. This will ensure that the benefits of Viet Nam's ESL strategy remain relevant, equitable and sustainable over time.



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