

Reimagining English Language Teacher Professionalisation in Vietnam: Entry Pathways, Professional Development, CEFR Alignment, and Institutional Conditions for Sustainable Reform

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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	
Citation: Nnabude, Christian Uche, & Nguyen, Thi Tan. (2026). Reimagining English language teacher professionalisation in Vietnam: Entry pathways, professional development, CEFR alignment, and institutional conditions for sustainable reform. UKR Journal of Education and Literature, 2(4), 194-203.	<i>Vietnam has entered a new phase of English-language policy in which improving English teaching quality is increasingly connected to national human capital development and international integration. Yet policy expansion does not necessarily produce corresponding improvements in teacher preparation, professional development, assessment, or institutional accountability. This study examines four interconnected dimensions of English language teacher professionalisation in Vietnam: teacher entry pathways, continuing professional development (CPD), institutional alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and accountability mechanisms linking teacher standards to student outcomes. A convergent mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 50 English language teachers in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang, while qualitative evidence comprised interviews with 15 teachers and administrators in leadership roles and analysis of 12 institutional policy documents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including analysis of variance, logistic regression, and effect-size estimates. Qualitative data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis and integrated with the quantitative findings using a confirm–extend–challenge framework. Forty-two percent of participants had entered English language teaching through non-specialist pathways without formal pedagogical bridging. Specialist and non-specialist entrants differed substantially in perceived pre-service preparation ($d = 2.12$), while 71.4% of non-specialist entrants reported fewer than 40 hours of pre-service pedagogical training. City of employment accounted for 60% of the variance in annual CPD hours ($\eta^2 = .60$). Only 38% of participants reported mostly or fully aligned institutional CEFR practices, while CEFR-specific institutional training was a significant predictor of reported alignment ($OR = 5.63$). Documentary analysis further showed that 67% of institutional policies lacked explicit accountability provisions linking teacher qualifications to student CEFR attainment. Qualitative findings revealed six themes, including Compliance Without Conviction, Geography as Destiny, Institutional Amnesia, and the Accountability Vacuum. Drawing on Human Capital Theory and Institutional Theory, the study argues that Vietnam's ELT challenge is fundamentally one of systemic alignment. The findings support nationally coherent entry pathways, geographically equitable CPD, substantive CEFR implementation, and outcome-oriented institutional accountability.</i> Keywords: English language teaching; teacher education; professionalisation; Vietnam; continuing professional development; CEFR; language policy

1. Introduction

English language education occupies an increasingly strategic position within Vietnam's educational, economic, and internationalisation agendas. Over the past two decades, the Vietnamese government has invested substantially in foreign-language education through national policy initiatives, curriculum reform, teacher development, and the adoption of proficiency frameworks intended to establish common standards. The National Foreign Language Project represented a major attempt to strengthen English education throughout the national education system. Decision 2080/QĐ-TTg subsequently adjusted and extended the project for 2017–2025 (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2017). Recent policy developments have further increased the strategic importance of English. In October 2025, the Vietnamese Prime Minister approved the project Making English the Second Language in Schools during 2025–2035, with a Vision to 2045, signalling a new phase in which English is expected to function increasingly across teaching, communication, management, and educational activities.

The expansion of policy ambition, however, raises a fundamental implementation question:

Does the institutional architecture of English language teaching possess the capacity required to deliver these increasingly ambitious objectives?

Recent scholarship suggests that important gaps remain between policy intentions and institutional practice. Ngo and Tran's analysis of English education in Vietnam identifies persistent discrepancies between national policy aspirations and implementation across institutional and curricular levels. Research on Vietnamese teachers similarly indicates that teachers' professional agency, institutional resources, and policy environments influence how national reforms are enacted in classrooms (Vu, 2024). Recent work has also shown that teachers' professional development can be constrained by financial, institutional, and contextual barriers, particularly outside major urban centres (Nguyen & Sit, 2025; Tran & Ngo, 2026).

The present study approaches this problem from a teacher-professionalisation perspective. Rather than examining teacher qualifications, CPD, CEFR implementation, and institutional governance as separate policy domains, it investigates their interaction.

The study focuses on four research questions:

RQ1. What entry pathways do English language teachers in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang utilise, and how do teachers and administrators perceive the adequacy of these pathways?

RQ2. To what extent do English language teachers across the three cities have equitable access to high-quality CPD, and what structural factors account for observed differences?

RQ3. How closely do institutional English language assessment practices align with CEFR benchmarks, and what factors facilitate or impede alignment?

RQ4. What governance and accountability mechanisms exist within institutional English language policy frameworks, and how effectively do they connect teacher qualifications with student CEFR attainment?

The article makes three contributions. First, it provides empirical evidence concerning teacher entry pathways and CPD inequalities across three major Vietnamese urban contexts. Second, it combines Human Capital Theory and Institutional Theory to explain how individual teacher capacity interacts with institutional structures. Third, it demonstrates how mixed-methods integration can distinguish formal policy compliance from substantive implementation.

The central argument is that Vietnam's ELT reform challenge is not primarily a shortage of policy ambition but a problem of structural alignment among teacher preparation, professional development, assessment standards, and institutional accountability.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Language Policy and Reform in Vietnam

Vietnam's English education policy has evolved through successive national projects designed to improve language proficiency and support international integration. The National Foreign Language Project 2020 represented a particularly significant intervention, establishing ambitious proficiency targets and promoting the use of CEFR-related benchmarks in language education. The project was subsequently revised and extended through Decision 2080/QĐ-TTg for 2017–2025. Contemporary scholarship has identified a recurring tension between ambitious national targets and the institutional conditions necessary for implementation. Ngo and Tran (2024), for example, argue that English proficiency remains important to employability and national development while substantial gaps persist between policy intentions and institutional practice.

The policy environment has now entered a new phase. Decision 2371/QĐ-TTg, issued in 2025, approved the 2025–2035 project for making English the second language in schools, with a vision to 2045 (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2025). The project explicitly emphasises improving the quality of English teaching, developing an English-language ecosystem within schools, and creating differentiated implementation pathways according to regional conditions.

This development increases rather than reduces the importance of teacher professionalisation. A policy that expands the functional role of English requires a sufficiently prepared, supported, and accountable teaching workforce.

2.2 Teacher Entry Pathways and Professionalisation

Teacher quality begins before teachers enter classrooms. Specialist initial teacher education provides prospective

teachers with disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, supervised practice, and opportunities to construct professional identities. However, English teaching systems sometimes rely on alternative recruitment pathways to address teacher shortages or immediate institutional demand.

The Vietnamese context is particularly important because English teachers operate within a rapidly changing policy environment. Recent research on Vietnamese preservice English teachers demonstrates that teacher identity is shaped by tensions among institutional expectations, professional aspirations, emotions, and agency (Nguyen & Ngo, 2025). Recent research on Vietnamese teacher education highlights the importance of coherent professional preparation and institutional conditions for teacher development (Le & Barnard, 2019; Nguyen & Ngo, 2025).

These findings suggest that teacher professionalisation should not be reduced to possession of an academic qualification. Professionalisation requires a coherent pathway connecting language proficiency, pedagogical preparation, supervised teaching, certification, and continuing learning.

2.3 Continuing Professional Development

CPD is increasingly recognised as an essential component of teacher quality. However, access to professional learning is rarely distributed equally. Teachers' opportunities may depend on institutional funding, geographical location, workload, availability of providers, and professional networks.

Recent Vietnamese research provides further support for examining CPD as an institutional rather than exclusively individual phenomenon. Nguyen and Sit (2025) identify challenges and opportunities in Vietnamese in-service teacher professional development, while recent qualitative evidence from the Mekong Delta identifies financial constraints, limited institutional support, and policy misalignment as barriers to meaningful professional learning (Tran & Ngo, 2026). The emerging Vietnamese literature therefore supports the argument that CPD participation is embedded within broader organisational and geographical structures.

This study extends that literature by explicitly testing the relationship between **city of employment and annual CPD access**.

2.4 CEFR and Assessment Alignment

Vietnam's adoption of CEFR-related standards represents an important form of international policy borrowing. CEFR adoption can provide common descriptors and reference points for curriculum, assessment, teacher development, and learner progression. However, the existence of a framework does not guarantee substantive alignment.

Recent Vietnamese research continues to examine the consequences of CEFR adoption, including its role in teacher proficiency assessment and curriculum implementation. Nguyen et al. (2025), for example, examine the adaptation of a European standard to assess English foreign-language

preservice teachers' proficiency in Vietnam. Recent scholarship also highlights the need to consider contextual adaptation rather than assuming that imported standards automatically translate into equivalent institutional practices.

The present study therefore distinguishes **formal CEFR adoption** from **substantive CEFR alignment**.

2.5 Teacher Agency and Policy Enactment

Policy is enacted rather than simply implemented. Teachers interpret policy through their professional knowledge, beliefs, resources, institutional expectations, and classroom realities. Vu's (2024) multiple-case study of Vietnamese primary EFL teachers demonstrates that teachers exercised different forms of agency when working within policy-constraining and low-resource environments.

Dao et al. (2025) similarly show that Vietnamese English teachers enacted curriculum reform through acceptance, adaptation, and resistance.

These studies are important for the present research because they challenge a purely top-down conception of reform. If teachers are expected to enact increasingly ambitious language policy, institutional systems must provide the resources and professional conditions required for meaningful enactment.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study integrates Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) and Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Human Capital Theory conceptualises education and training as investments in productive capabilities. Applied to ELT, the theory predicts that better-prepared teachers should possess greater pedagogical capacity and that continued investment in professional development should enhance professional performance.

Institutional Theory provides a complementary organisational explanation. DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) concept of institutional isomorphism explains how organisations adopt structures under coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures. However, organisations may adopt the formal appearance of reform without transforming underlying practices.

The combination of these perspectives produces the following proposition:

Sustainable ELT reform requires both adequate individual professional capacity and institutional conditions that make substantive implementation more likely than performative compliance.

This proposition is important because neither theory alone fully explains the Vietnamese case. Human Capital Theory explains differences in teacher preparation and the importance of CPD, whereas Institutional Theory explains why higher standards and policy mandates may not automatically generate changes in institutional practice.

4. Method

4.1 Research Design

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods design. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analysed independently, and integrated during interpretation. The quantitative strand established the prevalence and distribution of structural patterns, whereas the qualitative strand examined the institutional experiences and mechanisms underlying those patterns.

The integration strategy followed a confirm–extend–challenge framework. Quantitative findings were compared with qualitative themes to determine whether qualitative evidence confirmed, extended, or challenged the statistical interpretation.

This approach is consistent with the study's pragmatist paradigm and allowed the research questions rather than methodological allegiance to determine the combination of methods.

4.2 Participants

The quantitative sample comprised 50 English language teachers:

City	n	%
Hanoi	20	40
Ho Chi Minh City	20	40
Da Nang	10	20
Total	50	100

The qualitative component included 15 administrators and teachers occupying leadership roles. Twelve institutional policy documents were also analysed.

The original sampling strategy sought variation by city, institution type, and career stage. The study acknowledges that recruitment through institutional gatekeepers may have generated response bias and that the Da Nang subgroup was relatively small.

4.3 Instruments and Data Collection

The teacher questionnaire contained 45 items covering demographic characteristics, entry pathways, CPD, CEFR alignment, institutional policy, and reform perspectives. The instrument was developed from the literature and theoretical framework, reviewed by experts, and pilot-tested before administration.

Semi-structured interviews explored teacher recruitment, CPD, CEFR implementation, institutional policy, and reform expectations.

The document analysis examined institutional policy documents using a four-category accountability matrix.

4.4 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, analysis of variance, logistic regression, and effect-size estimates. The original study reports effect sizes

and confidence-oriented statistical interpretation consistent with APA conventions.

4.5 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis. The analysis generated 94 initial codes, 12 candidate themes, and six final themes.

The six themes were:

1. **Compliance Without Conviction**
2. **Geography as Destiny**
3. **The Proficiency Paradox**
4. **Institutional Amnesia**
5. **The Accountability Vacuum**
6. **Reform Readiness With Reservations**

4.6 Ethics and Trustworthiness

Participants provided written informed consent, were assigned coded identifiers, and were informed of their right to withdraw. The study reports member checking, peer debriefing, negative-case analysis, reflexive memoing, and an audit trail as strategies supporting qualitative credibility.

5. Results

5.1 Teacher Entry Pathways

Forty-two percent of teachers entered ELT through non-specialist pathways without formal pedagogical bridging. This represents 21 of the 50 participants.

Table 1: Teacher entry pathways

Entry pathway	n	%
Specialist ELT/TESOL degree	18	36
Related degree + bridging programme	7	14
Non-specialist pathway without formal bridging	21	42
In-service qualification after appointment	4	8
Total	50	100

The difference between specialist and non-specialist entrants in perceived pre-service preparation was substantial ($d = 2.12$).

Among non-specialist entrants, 71.4% reported receiving fewer than 40 hours of pre-service pedagogical training.

Table 2: Pre-service preparation among specialist and non-specialist entrants

Indicator	Specialist entrants	Non-specialist entrants
Mean perceived adequacy	3.89	2.14
Standard deviation	0.76	0.87
Fewer than 40 hours of pedagogical preparation	5.6%	71.4%
Difference in perceived preparation	$d = 2.12$	

The qualitative evidence extended this result through **The Proficiency Paradox**. Participants described situations in which teachers recognised limitations in their initial preparation but lacked systematic institutional mechanisms for addressing those limitations.

5.2 Geographical Inequality in CPD

CPD access varied considerably across the three cities.

Table 3: Annual CPD hours by city

City	Mean annual CPD hours
Hanoi	21.4
Ho Chi Minh City	34.1
Da Nang	15.3

The city effect was statistically significant:

$F(2,47) = 34.67, p < .001, \eta^2 = .60$.

Thus, city of employment accounted for approximately 60% of the variance in annual CPD hours.

The qualitative theme **Geography as Destiny** provided contextual explanation for the quantitative difference. Participants identified travel costs, unequal institutional funding, availability of training providers, and access to professional networks as important barriers.

5.3 CEFR Alignment

Only 38% of participants reported that their institutions were mostly or fully aligned with CEFR-related assessment expectations.

Table 4: Institutional CEFR alignment

Reported alignment	%
Mostly/fully aligned	38
Partially aligned	44
Not mostly/fully aligned	18

Logistic regression identified CEFR-specific institutional training as a strong predictor of reported alignment:

$OR = 5.63$.

Institution type and city were also significant predictors in the original model.

The qualitative evidence introduced an important qualification: Compliance Without Conviction. Participants described circumstances in which CEFR language appeared in formal institutional processes without necessarily producing corresponding changes in assessment practice.

5.4 Institutional Accountability

Document analysis identified a substantial accountability deficit.

Table 5: Accountability provisions in institutional policy documents

Accountability provision	Documents	%
Explicit link between teacher qualifications and student CEFR attainment	4	33
No explicit linkage	8	67
Total	12	100

The relationship between city and accountability provision was reported as strong:

$$\chi^2(2) = 6.34, p = .042, V = .73.$$

The qualitative theme **The Accountability Vacuum** showed that institutions frequently maintained separate records for teacher qualifications, CPD participation, and student achievement.

The theme **Institutional Amnesia** further indicated that reform commitments could weaken during leadership transitions because policy knowledge and responsibility were not consistently institutionalised.

5.5 Reform Readiness

Participants expressed broad support for systemic reform.

Table 6: Support for proposed reforms

Reform proposal	Mean support
National ELT Entry Standards Framework	4.12
Mandatory CEFR alignment audits	3.98
Equitable CPD Fund	4.43

The findings suggest that resistance to reform was not the dominant pattern. Instead, the qualitative evidence showed **Reform Readiness With Reservations**: participants generally supported reform when it was accompanied by adequate resources, realistic implementation periods, and practitioner consultation.

6. Integrated Findings

Table 7: Mixed-methods integration of quantitative and qualitative findings

Research question	Quantitative finding	Qualitative theme	Integration
RQ1: Entry pathways	42% non-specialist entry; $d = 2.12$	The Proficiency Paradox	Confirmation + extension
RQ2: CPD equity	City explains 60% of CPD variance	Geography as Destiny	Confirmation + explanation
RQ3: CEFR alignment	38% mostly/fully aligned; OR = 5.63 for CEFR training	Compliance Without Conviction	Challenge + extension
RQ4: Accountability	67% of documents lack linkage	Accountability Vacuum	Confirmation + extension
Cross-cutting reform	Strong support for reform	Reform Readiness With Reservations	Extension

The integrated analysis demonstrates why the mixed-methods approach is important. The quantitative data establish the magnitude of structural differences, whereas the qualitative evidence explains how these differences are experienced and reproduced institutionally.

7. Discussion

7.1 From Qualification Gaps to Professionalisation Gaps

The finding that 42% of participants entered ELT through non-specialist pathways is important because it challenges the assumption that the expansion of English teaching automatically produces a correspondingly professionalised teaching workforce.

The effect size of $d = 2.12$ indicates a very large difference in perceived preparation between specialist and non-specialist entrants. More importantly, 71.4% of non-specialist entrants reported fewer than 40 hours of pre-service pedagogical preparation.

This finding is consistent with the broader literature showing that Vietnamese teacher development is shaped by institutional and professional contexts rather than qualifications alone. Recent research on preservice teacher identity highlights the tensions that shape professional formation, while current research on teacher agency demonstrates the importance of teachers' capacity to interpret and enact policy within their institutional environments (Nguyen & Ngo, 2025; Vu, 2024).

The policy implication is therefore not that all non-specialist teachers are ineffective. Rather, the evidence supports the development of **formal bridging pathways** that recognise alternative entry routes while ensuring minimum professional preparation.

7.2 CPD Inequality as an Institutional Problem

The CPD findings provide particularly strong evidence of geographical inequality.

The η^2 of .60 means that city of employment explains a very substantial proportion of the observed variation in annual CPD hours. Although this result should not be interpreted causally, its magnitude suggests that professional learning opportunities are strongly associated with location.

This finding is reinforced by recent Vietnamese research identifying financial constraints, institutional support, and contextual conditions as important determinants of professional development (Nguyen & Sit, 2025; Tran & Ngo, 2026).

The implication is significant. If CPD is treated entirely as an individual responsibility, geographical and institutional inequalities may become reproduced as individual differences in teacher quality.

A national CPD strategy should therefore include **resource equalisation**, not simply participation requirements.

7.3 CEFR: Adoption Versus Enactment

The CEFR findings reveal one of the most theoretically important results of the study.

Although 38% of participants reported mostly or fully aligned institutional practices, qualitative evidence suggested that some forms of alignment were primarily administrative.

This supports an institutional-theory interpretation. Under strong regulatory pressure, institutions may adopt the language and visible structures associated with reform without necessarily transforming underlying professional practices.

This does not mean that CEFR adoption is ineffective. Rather, it suggests that framework adoption is a necessary but insufficient condition for alignment.

Recent Vietnamese research demonstrates that CEFR-related standards continue to shape teacher assessment and professional expectations, while current research on curriculum enactment emphasises the role of teachers and institutions in translating formal policy into classroom practice (Nguyen et al., 2026; Dao et al., 2025).

The study therefore recommends moving from CEFR recognition to CEFR implementation auditing.

7.4 The Accountability Vacuum

The documentary finding that 67% of institutional policy documents lacked explicit accountability linkages between teacher qualifications and student CEFR attainment is particularly important.

Institutions may know:

- who their teachers are;
- what qualifications they possess;
- how many CPD courses they have attended; and
- what student assessment results look like.

However, these datasets may remain institutionally disconnected.

The result is a form of **accountability fragmentation**.

Human Capital Theory predicts that investment in teacher capability should generate educational returns. Institutional Theory, however, predicts that such relationships may remain invisible when organisational systems do not require them to be measured.

The solution is therefore not simply more teacher evaluation. It is the creation of institutional information systems that allow professional-development investment and learner outcomes to be examined together.

8. Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes a multilevel explanation of ELT reform.

Individual level

Teacher qualifications and pedagogical preparation constitute human-capital resources.

Institutional level

Schools and language institutions determine whether those resources can be developed and applied.

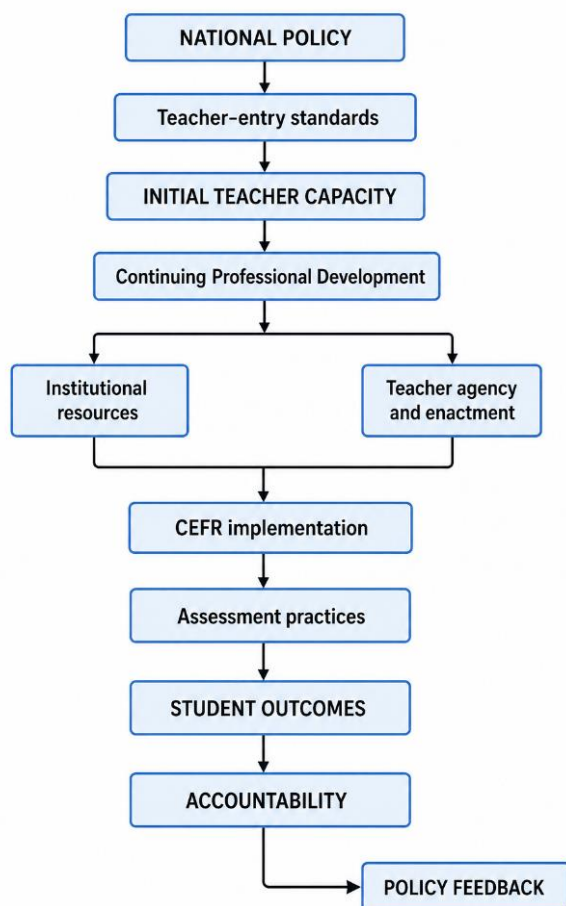
Policy level

Regulation establishes standards and expectations.

Outcome level

Assessment and accountability determine whether professional investment produces observable educational consequences.

Figure 1: Integrated model of ELT reform implementation



The model suggests that reform is unlikely to be sustainable when any major link in this chain is weak.

9. Policy Implications

The study supports four mutually reinforcing policy priorities.

9.1 Establish nationally coherent teacher entry pathways

A national framework should specify minimum requirements for:

- English-language proficiency;
- pedagogical knowledge;
- supervised teaching practice;
- professional certification; and
- bridging programmes for non-specialist entrants.

The framework should include transitional provisions for experienced serving teachers.

9.2 Establish an equitable CPD financing mechanism

Vietnam should consider a CPD funding mechanism that deliberately compensates for geographical inequalities.

The goal should be equitable **access to high-quality professional learning**, not merely equal numbers of training hours.

9.3 Introduce substantive CEFR implementation audits

Institutional CEFR audits should examine actual assessment practices rather than merely documentary references to CEFR.

Audit criteria could include:

1. assessment design;
2. descriptor use;
3. teacher assessment literacy;
4. moderation;
5. standard setting;
6. reliability;
7. learner progression; and
8. institutional use of assessment data.

9.4 Link teacher development with learner outcomes

Institutions should establish accountability systems connecting:

teacher qualification → CPD → professional practice → assessment → student attainment.

Such systems should be developmental rather than punitive.

10. Implications for the 2025–2035 English Policy

The findings are especially relevant given Vietnam's new policy objective of making English the second language in schools.

Decision 2371/QĐ-TTg explicitly seeks to improve English teaching quality, expand the use of English within schools, and develop an English-language ecosystem across educational institutions.

The present findings suggest that achieving these objectives will require more than curriculum expansion.

The policy must simultaneously address:

teacher supply + teacher preparation + CPD + assessment + institutional capacity + accountability.

This is where the study's contribution becomes particularly timely. The research was conducted around an earlier reform architecture, but its structural findings can be used to assess the implementation capacity required by the new 2025–2035 policy.

The new national professional-development agenda is already moving in this direction. Recent Vietnamese research continues to emphasise the need for stronger institutional support and more coherent professional-development systems (Nguyen & Sit, 2025; Nguyen, 2026; Tran & Ngo, 2026).

Thus, the study's CPD findings are not merely retrospective; they address a live policy problem.

11. Limitations

The study has several limitations.

First, the quantitative sample is relatively small ($n = 50$) and was purposively selected from three cities. The findings therefore should not be interpreted as nationally representative.

Second, the Da Nang subgroup comprised only 10 participants, limiting the precision of city-specific comparisons.

Third, recruitment through institutional gatekeepers may have introduced a pro-reform response bias.

Fourth, several variables rely on participant perceptions rather than independently verified institutional or classroom data.

Fifth, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. The finding that CEFR-specific training predicts reported alignment, for example, should not be interpreted as proof that training alone causes institutional alignment.

Finally, the study examines three urban contexts and therefore cannot directly establish how the patterns identified operate in rural or mountainous provinces.

These limitations point toward a national-scale longitudinal research agenda.

12. Conclusion

Vietnam's English education system is entering a period of unprecedented policy ambition. The objective of making English the second language in schools represents a major expansion of the role assigned to English within the education system.

The evidence presented in this study suggests that the principal challenge is not the absence of policy ambition but the alignment of policy ambition with institutional capacity.

Four structural problems are particularly significant:

1. fragmented teacher entry pathways;
2. unequal access to CPD;
3. incomplete substantive CEFR alignment; and
4. weak institutional accountability.

The mixed-methods evidence demonstrates that these are not isolated problems. They form a reinforcing system. Teachers who enter without adequate pedagogical preparation require effective CPD; CPD opportunities are unevenly distributed; CEFR implementation depends partly on institutional training and capacity; and weak accountability systems make it difficult to determine whether professional investments translate into improved learner outcomes.

The study therefore proposes a shift from **compliance-oriented reform toward systemic professionalisation**.

Such professionalisation requires nationally coherent entry pathways, equitable professional-development opportunities, substantive assessment alignment, and institutional systems

capable of connecting teacher development with student outcomes.

The study's participants were broadly supportive of reform, but their support was conditional on resources, realistic implementation timelines, and professional consultation. This finding is important. It suggests that the Vietnamese ELT profession is not necessarily resistant to reform. Rather, teachers require a policy architecture capable of supporting the expectations placed upon them.

The challenge for Vietnam's next phase of English-language reform is therefore not simply to raise standards.

It is to build the institutional conditions that make those standards achievable, sustainable, and educationally meaningful.

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