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Innovations in English Language Teaching and Learning to Meet FIBAA Standards: The Vietnamese Case

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ABSTRACT: *In the context of comprehensive educational reform in Vietnam, improving the quality of English language education programs has become a strategic priority. A key determinant of training quality is the alignment of curricula with international standards. This study examines the extent to which English language programs in Vietnam align with the accreditation standards of the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA), with particular attention to three key dimensions: teaching and learning methodology, teaching staff, and cooperation and partnerships. The study adopts a qualitative document analysis approach, drawing on multiple data sources, including FIBAA accreditation guidelines, national policy documents, and relevant journal articles. These materials are analysed using the FIBAA criteria as a conceptual framework to evaluate current practices and identify areas of convergence and divergence between the Vietnamese context and international benchmarks. The findings indicate that, despite notable efforts toward modernization and internationalization, several challenges remain. Based on these findings, the paper proposes recommendations focusing on three core areas: (1) innovating teaching and learning methodologies; (2) improving the quality of teaching staff; and (3) enhancing cooperation and partnerships. These findings offer valuable implications for policymakers, institutional administrators, and educators in shaping effective strategies that facilitate the alignment of English language programs in Vietnamese institutions with international standards.*

KEYWORDS: **FIBAA accreditation, English language education, teaching and learning methodology, teaching staff, cooperation and partnerships.**

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1. Introduction

In Vietnam, English has consistently remained at the centre of public discussion, attracting attention not only from learners but also from parents, educators, and policymakers. Amid increasing international integration, the importance of English has become even more pronounced, consolidating its status as the leading foreign language in education. Nonetheless, many Vietnamese learners remain unable to use English effectively for everyday communication despite years of formal instruction (Ly, 2022). This gap may indicate limitations in current teaching practices and program design.

In response to this challenge, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has organized a series of workshops to gather feedback on reforming English language teaching and learning. One key point raised is that such reforms must be guided by clearly defined standards and regulations to ensure that program quality is maintained and aligned with the demands of international markets. To address this issue, international accreditation organizations for English education are regarded as appropriate instruments for guiding change and credible mechanisms of quality assurance within the global academic landscape. However, there has been limited systematic analysis of how current English language programs in Vietnam align with international quality standards.

This study focuses on the FIBAA framework, particularly its asterisk criteria in three key areas: Article 3.3 Teaching and Learning Methodology, Article 4.1 Teaching Staff, and Article 4.3 Cooperation and Partnerships. It then compares

the current state of English education in Vietnam with the FIBAA asterisk criteria. Building on this analysis, the paper proposes solutions to support higher education institutions in meeting international benchmarks in three corresponding domains: advancing teaching and learning methodologies, enhancing the qualifications and pedagogical competence of teaching staff, and strengthening linkages with both the professional field and international partners. To that end, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent do English language education programs in Vietnam align with FIBAA standards regarding teaching and learning methods, teaching staff, and cooperation and partnerships?

RQ2. What gaps and challenges exist between current practices in Vietnamese higher education institutions and FIBAA accreditation requirements?

RQ3. What recommendations may help Vietnamese universities better meet FIBAA accreditation requirements?

2. Literature review

2.1. Accreditation in higher education institutions in Vietnam

According to Circular No. 04/2025/TT-BGDĐT, issued on February 17, 2025, which regulates the accreditation of higher education programs at different levels, program accreditation in Vietnamese universities is becoming increasingly an essential requirement (Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, 2025). In particular, programs accredited by international organizations play an important role in attracting prospective students and enhancing institutional reputation both domestically and internationally. Currently, ten international accreditation organizations are authorized to operate in higher education in Vietnam, including AQAS, FIBAA, ASIIN, AUN-QA, HCERES, QAA, ABET, ACBSP, THE-ICE, and ACQUIN. Among these, the organizations most relevant to foreign language teaching and learning programs are AUN-QA, HCERES, QAA, AQAS, ACQUIN, and FIBAA. Data from the Department of Quality Management indicate that, as of 31 August 2024, the largest number of foreign language-related programs accredited according to international quality standards in Vietnam have been accredited by AUN-QA, followed by FIBAA. AUN-QA functions as a regional accreditation body for universities within the ASEAN community, whereas FIBAA is an internationally recognized agency based in Switzerland and Germany. The growing presence of FIBAA highlights its status as a prestigious accreditation body in higher education quality assurance according to global standards. Achieving FIBAA accreditation contributes significantly to enhancing both the quality and transparency of Vietnamese higher education in the global arena, particularly in foreign language education programs.

2.2. Teaching and learning methods in English education

Teaching and learning methodologies in English are widely regarded as central to educational effectiveness. Over the past few decades, there has been a gradual shift from traditional to modern approaches. Traditional approaches, such as the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), help learners become acquainted with basic language rules and structures, along with translation practice, thereby providing accessibility and a clear foundation (Renau, 2016). However, these approaches are characterized by the use of fragmented knowledge, which can hinder learners' continuous development and progress. To address these limitations, more learner-centred paradigms have been developed, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Project-Based Learning (PBL), which emphasize interaction, meaningful communication, and learner autonomy (Sattarova, 2024). Despite their theoretical advantages, the implementation of these approaches remains complex and context-dependent. Previous studies suggest that learner-centred methodologies are not consistently applied across educational settings, particularly where institutional constraints, teachers' competencies, assessment systems, and classroom

dynamics influence pedagogical choices (Darsih, 2018; Nazim et al., 2023). In such contexts, traditional instructional practices often coexist with or even dominate innovative approaches. In addition, the integration of digital technologies has become an increasingly important aspect of English as a foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy. Tools such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), online platforms, and blended learning models are associated with greater flexibility and opportunities for personalized learning (Rahim, 2019; Wang et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of these technologies depends on multiple factors, including institutional infrastructure, teacher readiness, and pedagogical integration (Cao, 2023). As a result, the extent to which digital innovation translates into meaningful pedagogical change remains an area of ongoing discussion in the literature.

2.3. Teaching staff

Teacher quality is considered a key determinant of program effectiveness in higher education. This concept typically encompasses three interrelated dimensions: academic qualifications, research engagement, and pedagogical competence (Klingebiel & Klieme, 2016). Academic qualifications are often associated with formal credentials, which are commonly used as indicators of teacher quality. However, existing research suggests that formal qualifications alone do not fully capture teaching effectiveness (Burroughs et al., 2019). International quality frameworks generally emphasize that lecturers should not only possess qualifications aligned with program objectives but also actively contribute to research and engage in continuous professional development. However, some studies indicate that structural constraints such as workload and institutional priorities may influence the extent of research participation (Jamoom & Al-Omrani, 2021; Mehranirad & Behzadpoor, 2022). Professional development is also recognized as essential for maintaining and enhancing teaching quality (Lim et al., 2025). Professional development activities may include workshops, training programs, collaborative learning, and reflective practice. However, their effectiveness varies depending on factors such as relevance to teachers' needs, institutional support, and opportunities for sustained engagement (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025). Some studies suggest that professional development initiatives are most effective when they align with teachers' needs and influence their conceptions, practices, and willingness to change, rather than focusing primarily on technical skills (Fernandes et al., 2023; Qamariah & Hercz, 2025). Without such alignment, the long-term impact of professional learning may be limited.

2.4. Cooperation and partnerships

Collaboration with international academic institutions is widely viewed as a key mechanism for enhancing program quality. Such partnerships may include joint programs, student and staff exchanges, and collaborative research initiatives. These forms of cooperation are expected to facilitate knowledge exchange, promote academic mobility, and support the comparability of educational standards across contexts (DeLaquil et al., 2022).

In parallel, partnerships with industry and the professional field are increasingly emphasized as a means of improving graduate employability (Flynn et al., 2016). Work-integrated learning activities, such as internships, project-based collaboration, and guest lectures, are commonly incorporated into programs to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and professional practice (Jackson & Rowe, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these partnerships depends on the extent to which they are systematically integrated into curricula and supported by long-term institutional strategies.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

To address the research question, the study adopts a qualitative document analysis (QDA) approach as outlined by Bowen (2009). QDA is regarded as a valuable method for gathering rich insights into complex social practices through the analysis of documentary evidence within a conceptual framework, thereby enhancing the rigor and credibility of the research from the

perspective of both the researcher and the reader (Wood et al., 2020). Although issues such as limited data availability, incomplete information, and potential bias in documentary sources may arise, QDA approach, which involves the systematic synthesis and evaluation of textual material, can generate meaning, deepen understanding, and produce empirical insights (Morgan, 2022). In addition, this study does not aim to provide empirical generalization but rather to offer an interpretive analysis based on document evidence.

3.2. Data sources

The study relies primarily on secondary data obtained from multiple sources including official FIBAA accreditation documents, particularly the Assessment Guide for Bachelor and Master Programs (2025), national policy documents and regulations issued by the MOET, and peer-reviewed journal articles on English language teaching in Vietnam published within the last ten years (see Table 1).

The selection of documents was guided by two criteria: (1) their relevance to the three focal dimensions of the study, namely teaching and learning methods, teaching staff, and cooperation and partnerships and (2) the recency and reliability of the sources. The documents were catalogued and stored as PDF files using a standardized file-naming system consisting of the following elements: ID, topic, date, author and institution. This system facilitated the efficient retrieval and management of documents throughout the research process.

3.3. Data analysis procedures

The analysis was guided by selected FIBAA asterisk criteria, which served as the conceptual and analytical framework for examining the alignment between Vietnamese English language education programs and FIBAA quality standards. The data were analysed using a deductive qualitative content analysis approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The analysis was conducted in two phases: (1) establishing the analytical framework based on selected FIBAA criteria and (2) analysing the collected documents using this predetermined framework (see Table 1 for the data extraction and coding framework).

In the first phase, the selected FIBAA criteria were examined to identify key quality dimensions relevant to the study objectives. Three overarching themes were derived: (1) Teaching and Learning Methods (Article 3.3), (2) Teaching Staff (Article 4.1), and (3) Cooperation and Partnerships (Article 4.3). Relevant content from the FIBAA standards was condensed into meaning units and assigned descriptive codes, which were subsequently grouped into sub-themes representing major quality expectations. This process resulted in a structured coding framework for the subsequent document analysis.

In the second phase, the selected documents were read repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their content. Meaningful text segments related to the selected FIBAA criteria were identified, extracted, and coded. Similar codes were grouped into sub-themes and organized under the predetermined themes derived from the FIBAA framework. Finally, the findings were synthesized and systematically compared with the selected FIBAA standards to identify areas of alignment, gaps, and contextual challenges within Vietnamese higher education.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1. Teaching and learning methodology

According to Criterion 3.3.1, teaching and learning methodologies must be logically designed, aligned with qualification objectives, and actively engage students in the learning process (FIBAA, 2025). Institutions are also expected to employ varied methods, integrate an LMS, and ensure continuous review and innovation to maintain pedagogical relevance (FIBAA, 2025). In Vietnam, in response to the need for educational reform, the MOET has issued documents regulating teaching and learning methods in Vietnamese education, particularly in higher education. Specifically, teaching methods and techniques are expected to shift toward learner-centred approaches with a focus on communicative competence, addressing systemic shortcomings and developing a modern, inclusive, and innovative framework aligned

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Table 1. Data extraction and coding framework

Phase 1							
Type of Source	**Document (Source Code)**	**Research Site / Context**	**Key Extract**	**Code**	**Sub-theme**	**Theme**	**FIBAA Article - Criteria**
Accreditation framework	FIBAA (2025)	Assessment Guide	Teaching methods should actively engage students and integrate LMS	Student-centred pedagogy	Pedagogical innovation	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.1
Accreditation framework	FIBAA (2025)	Assessment Guide	Course materials should be current, accessible, supportive, and digitally compatible	Course materials	Teaching and learning resources	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.3
Accreditation framework	FIBAA (2025)	Assessment Guide	Institutions must maintain adequate faculty quantity	Faculty adequacy	Faculty structure	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.1
Accreditation framework	FIBAA (2025)	Assessment Guide	The faculty's qualifications should align with the program objectives.	Faculty qualification	Academic qualification	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.2
			Lecturers should demonstrate active engagement in research	Research-active faculty			
Accreditation framework	FIBAA (2025)	Assessment Guide	Continuous professional development and pedagogical competence are required	Professional development	Pedagogical competence	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.3
Accreditation framework	FIBAA (2025)	Assessment Guide	Cooperation with international and domestic institutions should be formalized and sustainable	Formalized partnerships	International and domestic cooperation	Cooperation and Partnerships	Article 4.3 - Criterion 4.3.1
Accreditation framework	FIBAA (2025)	Assessment Guide	Collaboration with industry should enhance employability and curriculum relevance	Industry linkage	Professional cooperation	Cooperation and Partnerships	Article 4.3 - Criterion 4.3.2
Phase 2							
Type of Source	**Document (Code Source)**	**Research Site / Context**	**Key Extract**	**Code**	**Sub-theme**	**Theme**	**FIBAA Article - Criteria**
National policy (Decision No. 2732/QĐ-TTg)	Prime Minister of Vietnam (2025)	The scheme for enhancing foreign language teaching and learning	Promotion of learner-centred and communicative teaching approaches	Educational reform	Communicative orientation	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.1
			Requirement for innovation in university teaching methods	Teaching innovation	Pedagogical modernization		

Journal article	Ho and Dimmock (2023)	Vietnamese universities	Teachers increasingly adopt varied techniques but retain teacher-centred practices	Partial learner-centred adoption	Surface-level reform	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.1
Journal article	Dao and Newton (2021)	Vietnamese EFL classrooms	Teachers' rationales for reducing the communicative and task-based activities	Resistance to innovation	Traditional teaching persistence	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.1
Journal article	Le et al. (2021)	Vietnamese universities during COVID-19	The use of LMS platforms and Zoom remained superficial due to infrastructure and workload constraints	Limited LMS integration	Digital learning barriers	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.1
Journal article	Phuong (2017)	Vietnamese universities	Use of international commercial textbooks from Cambridge and Oxford	International textbooks	Teaching and learning resources	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.3
Journal article	Vo and Tran (2025)	Vietnamese university English textbooks	Materials remain oriented toward native-speaker norms and classroom interactions rather than multilingual practice and real-life situations	Native-speaker orientation and Global English limitations	Teaching and learning resources	Teaching and Learning Methodology	Article 3.3 - Criterion 3.3.3
National policy (Circular No. 34/2026/ TT-BGDĐT)	Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (2026)	Admission quotas for undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and preschool education college programs	Determining student admission quotas based on quality assurance conditions	Lecturer-to-student ratios	Faculty structure	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.1
Journal article	Pham (2021)	Rural educational institutions in Vietnam	A shortage of qualified English lecturers and limited opportunities for professional development	Lecturer shortage	Unequal staffing distribution	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.1
National policy (Circular No. 01/2024/ TT-BGDĐT)	Ministry of Education and Training (2024)	Standards for higher education institutions	Requirement for academic qualifications of educators	Faculty qualification regulations	Human resources	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.2
National policy (Decision No. 89/QD-TTg (2019)	Vietnam Prime Minister (2019)	Enhancing the competencies of lecturers and administrators	Researchs and doctoral training for lecturers	Faculty qualification development	Academic advancement	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.2
Journal article	Tran et al. (2020)	Vietnamese universities	Low international publication rates among lecturers	Limited research productivity	Research engagement constraints	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.2

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Journal article	Vu (2020)	Vietnamese universities	Heavy workload and mandatory research requirements reduce lecturers' engagement in research activities.	Factors contributing to limited research activities	Research engagement constraints	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.2
Journal article	Ngo et al. (2022a)	Urban universities in Vietnam	Universities organize workshops and seminars for faculty development	Professional learning activities	Faculty development	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.3
Journal article	Ngo et al. (2022b)	Vietnamese universities	Administrative barriers and unequal access hinder professional development	Professional development barriers	Institutional constraints	Teaching Staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.3
Journal article	Ho and Dimmock (2023)	Vietnamese universities	A radical transition is unrealistic without adequate teacher preparation and requires a scaffolded approach through professional development	Teachers' belief	Pedagogical competence	Teaching staff	Article 4.1 - Criterion 4.1.3
Journal article	Phung et al., (2023)	Higher education development in Vietnam	Institutions have proactively expanded and strengthened the effectiveness of their international collaboration.	Institutions' attitude	International collaboration	Cooperation and Partnerships	Article 4.3 - Criterion 4.3.1
Journal article	Nguyen et al., (2021)	Joint-training programs in Vietnam	A growing number of universities now offer joint programs; however, their implementation remains uneven across different institutions	Joint programs	International collaboration	Cooperation and Partnerships	Article 4.3 - Criterion 4.3.1
Journal article	Bui and Takuro, (2024)	Vietnamese university–industry cooperation	The main forms of university–industry cooperation in Vietnam to date include knowledge transfer, collaborative recruitment, internship programs, and sponsorship activities	Types of cooperation	University–industry cooperation	Cooperation and Partnerships	Article 4.3 - Criterion 4.3.2
Journal article	Ha (2021)	Vietnamese university–industry cooperation	Industry cooperation is fragmented and weakly integrated into curricula	Fragmented industry linkage	Curriculum integration gap	Cooperation and Partnerships	Article 4.3 - Criterion 4.3.2
Journal article	Dang et al., (2024)	Vietnamese university–industry cooperation	Enterprise cooperation remains limited and largely informal, with little integration into curricula or systematic evaluation.	Underdeveloped enterprise cooperation	University–industry cooperation	Cooperation and Partnerships	Article 4.3 - Criterion 4.3.2

Source: Developed by the author.

with international standards (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2025). A study by Ho and Dimmock (2023) provides evidence that teachers appear to be increasingly aware of the benefits of this reform and are now using a greater variety of classroom techniques than in the past. Nevertheless, the expected outcomes have not yet been fully achieved, as Vietnamese lecturers in many contexts still tend to rely heavily on traditional teacher-centred approaches. The reasons may be attributable to several factors, including teachers' perceptions that communicative tasks are unsuitable for weaker students, the combined pressures of examinations and limited class time, and a lack of familiarity with innovative methods (Dao & Newton, 2021). With respect to digital teaching and learning, although the COVID-19 pandemic prompted universities to adopt new platforms such as Moodle and Zoom, their use has often remained relatively superficial, possibly because of systemic barriers, including insufficient infrastructure, lack of institutional support, limited IT competence, and heavy teaching workloads (Le et al., 2021).

In line with Criterion 3.3.3, course materials and recommended literature must be up to date, aligned with intended learning outcomes, and compatible with digital education formats (FIBAA, 2025). In addition, course materials must be easily accessible and designed to motivate further learning (FIBAA, 2025). Most Vietnamese universities employ commercial English coursebooks from foreign publishers such as National Geographic Learning, Cambridge, and Oxford, which provide a broad global perspective on cultural content (Phuong, 2017). However, some English coursebooks used in Vietnamese universities remain oriented toward native-speaker norms and classroom-based interactions, with limited representation of non-native English users, multilingual practices, and global communicative scenarios (Vo & Tran, 2025).

These findings suggest a partial alignment between Vietnamese English language education and FIBAA standards, particularly Criteria 3.3.1 and 3.3.3. Although policy reforms demonstrate institutional commitment to pedagogical modernization, classroom implementation appears to remain constrained by examination pressures, teachers' beliefs, and institutional conditions. Notably, the dominance of grammar-based, high-stakes assessments creates a misalignment with communicative teaching objectives, requiring lecturers to prioritize form-focused instruction. In addition, limited support and heavy workloads may further constrain the adoption of innovative pedagogies, reflecting a gap between policy intentions and classroom realities. As a result, traditional practices continue to play a significant role in language education in Vietnam. Similarly, the relatively superficial use of LMS platforms may indicate broader infrastructural and organizational limitations affecting digital transformation. Furthermore, while the adoption of international coursebooks reflects efforts toward modernization, the continued emphasis on native-speaker norms may limit students' preparedness for multilingual and global communication contexts. Consequently, the current situation appears to demonstrate only partial fulfilment of FIBAA expectations concerning innovative pedagogy and future-oriented teaching resources.

4.2. Teaching staff

First, regarding the structure and quantity of teaching staff (Criterion 4.1.1), institutions are required to maintain an adequate number of permanent lecturers to deliver the curriculum and sustain appropriate student–staff ratios (FIBAA, 2025). In Vietnam, the MOET has issued regulations stipulating that student admission quotas must be determined based on quality assurance conditions, including lecturer-to-student ratios (1:40), with the aim of aligning enrolment capacity with institutional training resources and ensuring the quality of higher education (Ministry of Education and Training, 2026). However, rural areas face not only a shortage of language teachers but also a lack of qualified staff, who have limited access to professional development opportunities (Pham, 2021).

Second, the criterion concerning academic and professional qualifications (Criterion 4.1.2)

stipulates that lecturers must possess academic qualifications corresponding to the intended learning outcomes of the study program and demonstrate active engagement in research (FIBAA, 2025). In Vietnam, the MOET has issued specific regulations related to academic qualifications of educators, such as the requirement that at least 20% of full-time lecturers in institutions that do not offer doctoral programs must hold a doctorate, with this threshold rising to 30% from 2030; for institutions offering doctoral programs, the requirement is a minimum of 40%, which will increase to 50% from 2030 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2024). Moreover, to enhance the academic qualification, the MOET also provides researchs for faculty members to pursue doctoral training both domestically and abroad, as well as opportunities for postdoctoral research and advanced professional development (Vietnam Prime Minister, 2019). However, the research engagement of many lecturers appears to remain limited, particularly in terms of publications in internationally recognized journals (Tran et al., 2020). Some English lecturers at Vietnamese universities describe themselves as "teaching machines" due to heavy teaching workloads, which leave little time for research (Vu, 2020). Moreover, mandatory research policies may lead lecturers to regard institutional projects as mere formalities with limited relevance to teaching practice and little value for professional development (Vu, 2020).

Third, FIBAA highlights pedagogical qualifications (4.1.3) as an asterisk criterion essential for accreditation. Institutions must demonstrate that lecturers possess not only academic expertise but also formal didactic competence, evidenced through training, certificates, or documented teaching practice (FIBAA, 2025). They must also establish clear criteria for pedagogical skills and provide opportunities for continuous professional development, particularly in new didactical techniques and digital pedagogy (FIBAA, 2025). In Vietnam, some lecturers, particularly in major urban centres, report that their institutions frequently organize professional development activities such as seminars, workshops, and conferences, as well as job-related opportunities through research projects, textbook development, and professional meetings (Ngo et al., 2022a). Nevertheless, participation is hindered by top-down national requirements with unrealistic goals and irrelevant content, limited financial support, complex administrative procedures, weak workplace relationships, and unequal access to professional development opportunities (Ngo et al., 2022b). Moreover, regarding Vietnam's adoption of the learner-centred education (LCE) approach, Ho and Dimmock (2023) found that although teachers implemented certain techniques aligned with LCE, they continued to follow teacher-centred practices such as controlling content, pacing, and classroom activities.

Overall, Vietnamese higher education institutions show incomplete alignment with FIBAA Criteria 4.1.1, 4.1.2, and 4.1.3. While regulatory policies and national initiatives indicate strong institutional efforts to improve both quality and quantity of lecturers, actual implementation appears to remain constrained by structural and institutional conditions. The uneven distribution of qualified lecturers reflects broader inequalities between institutions and regions, which may limit consistent compliance with international standards. Similarly, limited research productivity appears to be associated not only with individual motivation but also with systemic pressures such as excessive teaching workloads and insufficient research support; therefore, FIBAA's expectations for active research engagement among lecturers may only be partially met. In relation to pedagogical competence, the findings suggest that professional development activities tend to prioritize technical training while paying less attention to teachers' beliefs, theoretical understanding, and long-term pedagogical transformation. Consequently, reforms may result in the procedural or superficial adoption of innovative practices rather than substantive changes in teaching approaches. This suggests that enhancing pedagogical competence requires strengthening teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and theoretical awareness rather than just focusing on technical adjustments. Overall, these patterns indicate that policy compliance

alone may be insufficient to fully achieve FIBAA expectations regarding research-active, pedagogically competent, and professionally supported teaching staff.

4.3. Teaching cooperation

Criteria 4.3.1 requires study programs, especially joint or double-degree programs, to demonstrate formalized and binding cooperation with other higher education institutions and academic networks (FIBAA, 2025). Such cooperation must be contractually regulated, transparent, and embedded within the program design to guarantee the comparability of standards, recognition of credits, and quality assurance across institutions (FIBAA, 2025). In Vietnam, the institutions have proactively strengthened and enhanced the effectiveness of their international collaborations, enhancing the quality of training and teaching workforce (Phung et al., 2023). Moreover, a growing number of universities now offer joint programs under 2+2 or 3+1 models in collaboration with partners in the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia (Nguyen et al., 2021). However, established and well-funded institutions are likely to be in a stronger position to develop and maintain collaborations with reputable international partners, while ensuring that joint programs meet the same quality standards as those of the parent institutions continues to pose a challenge (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Under Criteria 4.3.2, cooperation with the professional field is defined as a cornerstone of vocationally oriented and franchise programs (FIBAA, 2025). Institutions must demonstrate structured collaboration with companies, professional associations, and public organizations, ensuring that students engage in internships, project work, and industry feedback processes (FIBAA, 2025). In the Vietnamese context, many universities have established cooperation with industries in internship schemes, organized job fairs, sponsorship, licensing, and invited practitioners to deliver guest lectures, thereby connecting students with real-world contexts (Bui & Takuro, 2024). Nevertheless, significant limitations remain, stemming from universities' reliance on professionals in managerial positions, inadequate departmental support, and the limited engagement of industry experts owing to time constraints (Ha, 2021). Additionally, cooperation with enterprises remains underdeveloped, with partnerships largely limited to low-level and informal forms of engagement rather than being fully integrated into curricula or systematically evaluated (Dang et al., 2024).

These findings suggest that Vietnamese universities have made notable progress in expanding internationalization and industry engagement; however, alignment with FIBAA Criteria 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 remains partial. Although universities are increasingly establishing formal partnerships and joint programmes, internationalization efforts appear unevenly distributed, with stronger implementation in well-resourced or internationally oriented institutions. Inter-university collaboration within the domestic context also remains limited. Moreover, fragmented university–industry collaboration reflects broader systemic challenges in integrating employability-oriented activities into curriculum planning and programme design. As a result, such partnerships may not yet consistently contribute to long-term improvements in programme quality, graduate competencies, or professional relevance. Overall, the findings suggest that Vietnamese higher education institutions may need to move beyond symbolic cooperation toward more strategically embedded, outcome-oriented, and sustainable partnerships in order to fully meet FIBAA expectations.

5. Recommendations

5.1. Teaching and learning methods

Regarding teaching and learning methods, there is a need for a gradual shift away from traditional teacher-centred methods such as the GTM and the ALM toward student-centred approaches such as TBLT, PBL, and the Flipped Classroom. These approaches have been shown to foster learners' communicative competence and contribute to greater learner autonomy through activities such as preparing materials,

presenting ideas, and engaging in debate (Nguyen & Jaspaert, 2021; Fisher et al., 2024). These pedagogical innovations directly address previously identified misalignments between communicative learning objectives and exam-oriented practices. However, their effectiveness depends on parallel reforms in assessment systems and institutional support, without which implementation is likely to remain partial.

In addition to updating and applying new teaching and learning methods, it is important to recognize that existing challenges may limit the extent to which such reforms can be meaningfully implemented. First, the examination and testing systems could be reconsidered so that they assess students' ability to apply language in everyday communication and critical thinking, rather than focusing narrowly on grammar and reading comprehension. Such changes would mitigate the dilemma in which lecturers devote significant time and resources to communicative methods that are not directly rewarded by the exam system. Another challenge lies in teachers' perception that innovative methods are difficult to implement for weaker students in classrooms with diverse abilities and learning styles. This issue can be addressed through personalized learning supported by artificial intelligence (AI) and LMS. AI can be integrated into curriculum design, content creation, and assessment through applications such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and ELSA Speak, while LMS platforms can potentially provide personalized feedback, systematic progress tracking, and more efficient course management. Personalized learning allows teachers to adjust content, pace, and methodology to individual learners, replacing the one-size-fits-all model (Ayeni et al., 2024). While these technologies offer potential for personalization, their implementation is contingent on institutional capacity, including technological infrastructure, digital literacy, and equitable access for both teachers and students.

In terms of course materials and literature, higher education institutions would benefit from greater investment in digitalization. Instead of relying on fixed course-books with limited content, institutions should integrate digital resources such as online libraries that enable learners to access a wide range of e-books and academic materials tailored to their courses. Moreover, to provide students with updated and globally relevant learning materials, institutions might also expand access to international databases such as ProQuest, JSTOR, and Cambridge Core. These measures have the potential to modernize the learning environment while aligning with FIBAA's requirements for teaching resources that are current, accessible, and future-oriented.

5.2. Teaching staff

To meet national regulations on student–staff ratios and FIBAA standards, universities should adopt strategies to attract highly qualified faculty capable of sustaining program quality. This can be achieved by strengthening five key areas that enhance institutional attractiveness: reputation, organizational culture, role characteristics, career development opportunities, and physical environment (Abell & Becker, 2020). Additionally, strengthening the research engagement of teaching staff is often regarded as pivotal to improving the overall quality of higher education institutions. Universities might implement measures to motivate faculty to conduct research driven by genuine passion and scholarly interest, giving them a sense of ownership rather than subjecting them to 'publish or perish' pressure. Such measures include allocating teaching and research hours more reasonably, offering competitive research funding, and providing opportunities for research competence development. These measures are particularly important given existing structural constraints, where heavy teaching loads and limited research support reduce the feasibility of sustained academic engagement. Without addressing these conditions, efforts to improve research productivity are likely to remain largely procedural.

Regarding pedagogical qualification, faculty willingness to engage in professional learning play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of professional development programs. To stimulate teachers' motivation to

learn, professional learning activities could be carefully designed based on teachers' real needs rather than symbolic requirements. In addition to enhancing technical skills, it may be beneficial to strengthen lecturers' beliefs and theoretical awareness through workshops on action research and support from industry experts. These initiatives might alleviate pressure and could increase teachers' confidence in their capacity to adjust instructional practices and respond to pedagogical innovations. Equally important is the role of institutional leadership in fostering teachers' motivation to participate in professional learning. When school leaders articulate a clear institutional vision for teaching and learning, teachers are more likely to internalize organizational goals as their own. This alignment may help increase autonomous motivation to engage in professional learning activities. Furthermore, leadership might establish transparent and flexible funding mechanisms for continuous training, streamline administrative processes to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, and ensure equal access to professional development opportunities. In this way, lecturers could not only acquire technical skills but also cultivate deeper theoretical awareness, beliefs, and knowledge systems, enabling reforms to generate sustainable rather than superficial change.

5.3. Cooperation and partnerships

Universities should move beyond symbolic commitments and establish binding agreements with both domestic and international partners. Such collaboration could facilitate student and faculty exchanges, the organization of international conferences and seminars, and joint research initiatives. For smaller-scale institutions, cooperation might begin with virtual exchanges, joint teaching, and guest lectures before expanding to larger collaborations. Larger universities are often better positioned to engage in broader and more effective forms of cooperation, such as international joint study programs, collaborative research in social and technological fields, and exchange programs for both lecturers and students. However, to ensure that these initiatives are practical rather than symbolic, they should ideally be supported by standardized agreements and comply with the MOET regulations to gain formal recognition. In addition, capacity-building programs for staff are essential to strengthen their ability to manage cooperation projects and integrate global perspectives into curricula.

Partnerships with industry are also widely recognized as critical. Strengthening linkages with professional associations, corporations, and multinational companies can create opportunities for student exchange programs and enhance employability after graduation. Memoranda of agreement with partners should be carefully managed and synchronized between universities and their affiliated units to maximize resources and deliver tangible benefits to all stakeholders. Furthermore, universities should establish partnerships with recognized professional associations and embed these into curricula. In this way, graduates can earn credits acknowledged by international professional bodies, thereby potentially ensuring that their qualifications and skills are recognized in the labour market. Finally, the regular organization of events such as career fairs involving students, staff, industry representatives, and business partners from diverse sectors can further open opportunities for collaboration and provide valuable employment pathways for graduates.

6. Conclusions

The reform of English language education in Vietnam is considered both a national priority and an urgent necessity. While Vietnam has made notable progress, significant challenges appear to persist, including entrenched teacher-centred approaches, limited research engagement, and relatively superficial forms of cooperation. Such findings imply that universities should institutionalize reforms not as isolated initiatives but as part of a more holistic and context-sensitive approach to curriculum, staffing, and partnerships. Consequently, this can enhance the quality of English language education and better prepare graduates with skills relevant to global professional contexts.

The study is subject to several limitations. It relies mainly on document analysis, so some conclusions about actual pedagogical practices remain interpretive. Moreover, the findings represent a snapshot and may not reflect longer-term developments and the study's focus on a single national context limits broader generalizability. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive, and further research incorporating comparative cases and empirical data would be necessary to provide a more comprehensive understanding

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