

Regis University

ePublications at Regis University

Regis University Student Publications
(comprehensive collection)

Regis University Student Publications

Summer 2024

Empowering English Proficiency: A Program to Excellence in the Vietnam Mekong Delta for Advancing English Proficiency for Future Generations

Dang Thai Bao Vy
Regis University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/theses>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [International and Comparative Education Commons](#), [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#), and the [University Extension Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vy, Dang Thai Bao, "Empowering English Proficiency: A Program to Excellence in the Vietnam Mekong Delta for Advancing English Proficiency for Future Generations" (2024). *Regis University Student Publications (comprehensive collection)*. 1145.
<https://epublications.regis.edu/theses/1145>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Regis University Student Publications at ePublications at Regis University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Regis University Student Publications (comprehensive collection) by an authorized administrator of ePublications at Regis University. For more information, please contact epublications@regis.edu.

Title

Empowering English Proficiency: A Program to Excellence in the Vietnam Mekong Delta for Advancing English Proficiency for Future Generations

Personal Statement

I am thrilled to introduce the project, "Empowering English Proficiency: A Program to Excellence in the Vietnam Mekong Delta for Advancing English Proficiency for Future Generations". This initiative embodies my unwavering commitment to bridging linguistic barriers and fostering educational empowerment within the communities of the Mekong Delta. Having witnessed firsthand the transformative power of language proficiency during my interactions with students in FPTU and families in this region, I am deeply motivated to spearhead this endeavor. The Mekong Delta's culturally rich history and boundless potential resonate profoundly with me, and I believe that bolstering English proficiency will be instrumental in unlocking countless opportunities for its inhabitants to excel locally and/or internationally.

The proposed program shall be designed with a holistic approach, addressing not only language acquisition but also incorporating cultural exchange and community engagement. By leveraging immersive learning experiences, interactive workshops, and digital resources, I aim to promote a dynamic learning environment that can nurture curiosity, critical thinking, and global awareness among participants on the importance of English.

Collaboration will be an important instrument that I am eager to work closely with local educators, community leaders, and passionate volunteers to create a sustainable framework that caters to the specific needs and aspirations of the Mekong Delta's youth. Through mentorship programs and peer-to-peer interactions, I wish to foster a supportive learning ecosystem that goes beyond traditional classroom boundaries.

Furthermore, I recognize the importance of monitoring progress and adapting to evolving requirements. Regular assessments and feedback loops will ensure that this program remains responsive and effective, guaranteeing that each participant attains a level of English proficiency that empowers them to pursue higher education and career opportunities.

I believe the impact of this project shall extend beyond language acquisition. By nurturing confident, articulate, and culturally aware individuals, I look forward to seeing the next generation of leaders, innovators, and changemakers who will drive positive transformation in their communities and beyond with an excellent grasp in English language.

I am wholeheartedly committed to the success of this program and will dedicate myself to its execution with unwavering passion and diligence. With the support of like-minded individuals and organizations, I am confident that "Empowering English Proficiency" will not only elevate the linguistic capabilities of the Mekong Delta but also serve as a beacon of hope for future generations toward excellence in English proficiency, and in doing so, empower the bright futures of the Mekong Delta's youth.

Executive Summary

There are three major approaches (strategies) to be adopted by FPTU to implement the "Abroad English Semester Program" as a commendable initiative for Vietnamese students in empowering their English proficiency through abroad studying experience. The first approach is to create a good program design or framework. Here the academic focus shall be the offering of a variety of courses beyond just general English. This shall include courses related to the students' majors or areas of interest to keep them engaged such as considering on courses relating to business communication, creative writing, or English for specific fields like technology or healthcare. Also, to identify common challenges and preferences regarding study abroad programs. To facilitate credit transfer processes and provide academic advising to ensure a

seamless transition back to their home institution. On the language immersion aspect there is a need to balance coursework with real-world language experiences, to organize homestay programs with native speakers, cultural excursions, and volunteer opportunities where students can practice their English in everyday situations. In terms of skill development, the program shall integrate practical skill development like public speaking, debate, and presentation workshops to boost confidence and fluency. In designing the curriculum, the approach is aiming for a well-structured curriculum that balances language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and cultural immersion. The first approach is also to include practical language use scenarios such as academic discussions, presentations, and real-life interactions.

The second approach is on the selection process for enrolling students with proper English foundation i.e., English proficiency level. As such, it is important to set clear English proficiency benchmarks for student acceptance. Offering preparatory courses for students who almost meet the requirements to boost their academic performance. i.e., to ensure they can comfortably handle the demands of abroad semester studies. The selection process does involve conducting interviews or essays writing to assess students' motivation and goals for the program. This helps select students who will get the most out of the experience.

The third approach is focusing on the logistics and support. This program is to partner with universities in English-speaking countries that offer semester programs or have existing international student support structures. Collaborating with host universities or language schools in English-speaking countries and where possible arrange language exchange programs where Vietnamese students interact with native speakers. Negotiating partnerships to ensure affordability, academic quality, and cultural integration support for Vietnamese students. The logistics and support shall involve pre-departure training by providing workshops to prepare students for cultural differences, academic expectations, and practicalities like budgeting and travel. Regularly assess students' language proficiency using standardized tests (e.g., IELTS,

TOEFL). Monitor progress through assignments, presentations, and participation. Address potential challenges and provide coping mechanisms. As for the ongoing support the approach is to offer services while students are abroad, including academic advising, mental health resources, and assistance with visa renewals or other issues. Establish a support network consisting of local staff, mentors, or peer advisors to assist students during their stay abroad. Organize cultural activities like food fare classes, city tours, and visits to historical sites. Facilitate internships or volunteer opportunities in English-speaking workplaces. Encourage participation in extracurricular activities and events (as cultural immersion activities) to facilitate interactions with native speakers. Provide 24/7 emergency contact information.

Other additional considerations for implementing the proposed program shall include financial aid by exploring scholarship opportunities or payment plans to make the program accessible to a wider range of students. Post-program integration is to facilitate re-entry programs or workshops to help students integrate their abroad experience into their academic and personal lives back in Vietnam. Encourage them to share their experiences and insights with their peers. Establish alumni network for past program participants to stay connected, share experiences, and offer mentorship to future students. Foster connections for future career prospects. For sustainability, it is important to evaluate the feedback from students, faculty, and partners to continuously improve the program's effectiveness and relevance. This is leading to sustainability and expansion of the program for long-term sustainability, including securing funding sources and building strategic partnerships. Explore opportunities to expand the program to reach more students and offer additional destinations or program formats.

FPTU does acknowledge that each student's learning journey is unique. Flexibility, adaptability, and personalized support are key to a successful AbES program. FPTU believes that these strategies, in tandem with one of FPTU missions, can create an "Abroad English Semester Program" that effectively empowers Vietnamese students to improve their English

language skills and gain valuable international experience.

Literature Review

This literature review is concerning identification of potential factors for empowering the English proficiency among the young generation in Vietnam Mekong Delta region. It explores the primary ways students choose to fulfill English language standards as stipulated and analyzes the factors influencing the choices of non-English major students in universities in Vietnam. The literature review seeks to check the common ways non-English majored students choosing to gain their target English proficiency and the factors that affect their choices. An overview is also given on professional development for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam per the recent developments in the government's policy. Moreover, the literature review elaborates on the differences among some key stakeholders, and it aims to highlight the implications of these findings for improving the quality and effectiveness of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education programs at higher education institutions facing similar educational contexts. Some connections between the importance of English proficiency in Vietnam and the economic development are also presented.

Vo Thien An et al (2023) conducted a study on Factors influencing Vietnamese students' choices to attain English proficiency standards in a university in Vietnam. In his study Vo revealed that non-English major university students are generally aware of the English proficiency standards, but their choice of method for achieving these standards is influenced by a variety of factors, including difficulty level, future goals, alignment with learning needs, and financial considerations. It emphasizes the importance of careful decision-making to ensure success in meeting proficiency requirements. Students should consider their individual needs and capabilities to ensure success in meeting English proficiency standards. These include the

difficulty level of the methods, future career goals, alignment with learning and research needs, and the desire to enhance English proficiency. Affordability and peer collaboration also play significant roles (Vo Thien An et al., 2023).

The literature review on government policy by an article of Dang V. H. N. (2018) regarding profession development for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam shows that high school EFL teachers have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by the Vietnamese government's policy for professional development. The literature review provides a good view on the importance of teacher professional development (TPD) in the context of globalization, particularly focusing on English as a foreign language (EFL) to be taught by teachers in Vietnam (Nhan, 2018).

However, the teachers also face challenges, particularly related to the cost and time commitment associated with participating in these courses. Dudzik and Nguyen (2013) point out a significant gap between policy expectations and the actual proficiency levels of high school English teachers in Vietnam. Dudzik and Nguyen (2013) state that over 90% of these teachers did not meet the specified requirements.

Furthermore, studies have found that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education programs at higher education institutions found potential issues in ESP education. Duyen and Hoang (2020) conducted a study in a Vietnamese public university on English language requirements for occupational purposes. They found a misalignment between what is taught in the university and what is required in the workplace. This misalignment could be a contributing factor to not meeting the expectations despite efforts to enhance the quality and effectiveness of English language education programs. It was recommended to focus more attention on developing teachers and students' understanding of English requirements in real-world working environments (Duyen & Hoang, 2020). This implies a need for practical, industry-specific training and knowledge.

The literature review on English Language for Teaching and Learning in Vietnam (ELT) policy (2017) provides insights into the state of English education in Vietnam. It shows that the Doi Moi policy in 1986 and Vietnam's membership in ASEAN in 1995 are pivotal events leading to market reforms and increased foreign investment. This suggests a connection between economic development and the need for English proficiency in Vietnam. The literature review also highlights several ELT key challenges in English education, including a shortage of qualified English teachers, weak communicative skills, and outdated textbooks. These factors contribute to poor performance in English exams, particularly in university entrance exams. Statistics on English exam performance in 2018, indicating a significant percentage of students scoring below 5 out of 10. Vietnam acknowledges that proficiency in foreign languages via ELT policy provides a significant advantage for its workforce ("Vietnam English Language Training," 2018). Due to various challenges, the Vietnam government decided to extend some of the English language learning and teaching objectives to 2025 that on December 22, 2017, the Vietnamese government approved Decision No. 2080/QĐ-TTg, amending and supplementing the project for the period 2008 to 2020. The newly amended project emphasizes the continuation of the new foreign language curriculum at all academic levels and aims to enhance English proficiency among students to meet the demands of studying and working, with the goal of achieving foreign language universalization by 2025 ("Vietnam English Language Training," 2018).

A chapter by M. T. Ngo and L. T. Tran (2024) on "Current English Education in Vietnam: Policy, Practices, and Challenges" (open access Springer journal) provides an overview of the socio- economic, cultural, political, and technological transformations that have occurred in Vietnam since the implementation of the Đổi Mới policy in 1986. This policy marked a pivotal moment in Vietnam's history, signifying the country's commitment to national economic development, internationalization, and globalization. The chapter examines Vietnam's national foreign language policy and the current landscape of English education, particularly within the

context of higher education and its connection to employability.

Despite recognizing the importance of English language proficiency as a crucial soft skill for graduates' employability, the chapter by M. T. Ngo and L. T. Tran (2024) highlighted significant challenges facing English language education in Vietnam. It argues that while government policies ambitiously prioritize the development of English skills, the actual implementation at institutional, curriculum, and subject levels across all education sectors, including higher education, falls short. This discrepancy has resulted in a substantial gap between policy intentions and practical outcomes, leading to low English proficiency levels among Vietnamese graduates.

The chapter also suggested that the context of English education in Vietnam serves as an appropriate case study to investigate how improvements in English education can effectively enhance graduates' employability. By examining the challenges and shortcomings within the current system, the chapter aims to identify strategies and reforms that can bridge the gap between policy goals and educational outcomes, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of graduates' English language skills and their readiness for the global job market.

Touching on foreign language policy changes, the article by Diana L. Duzik and Nguyen Q. T. N. available in the ASEAN Integration and the Role of ELT publication (2015), revealed that in response to growing regional and international demand for workers with FL skills, the government of Vietnam issued a decision to renovate thoroughly the tasks of teaching and learning foreign language within the national education system in order to produce graduates who gain the capacity to use a foreign language independently. The government decided to push to give birth to the National Foreign Language 2020 (NFL2020) Project. According to Vice Minister of Education Nguyen Vinh Hien, who oversees general education, the NFL2020 is expected to bring about a fundamental change by 2015 in the quality and the methodology of teaching English and other FLs with the expected outcome of a nation where a strengthened

FL capacity is a competitive advantage in the region. This educational renovation addresses a context in which students aged between 16-18 years old who have studied English for approximately 900 hours at upper-secondary level can often not communicate in English effectively, and where teaching and learning are often exam oriented and focused on vocabulary, grammar, and translation rather than communication. In general, Vietnam's NFL2020 demonstrates this multi-dimensionality. It exhibits national, governmental, policy-level, institutional, administrative, financial, and human resource-building initiatives. At the national level, the NFL2020 has issued education policies such as the CEFR-based language proficiency benchmarks for teachers, learners, and officials. It has developed a competency framework for English language teachers (the ETCF).

Regarding teaching effectiveness in Vietnam universities, it showed that teaching English, especially English for specific purposes, at universities in Vietnam has been a matter of significant concern i.e., there are issues with the effectiveness of current teaching methods. The ineffective teaching of English leads to a problem where graduates are not meeting the English language requirements expected by employers. This may be causing a rise in unemployment rates among graduates. English has become an almost indispensable language for communication, particularly among young people. This underscores the critical need for effective English instruction. In 2016, Nguyen and Pham conducted an empirical study using survey data from both teachers and students at universities in Hanoi. Through their findings, Nguyen and Pham (2016) identified factors and recommendations regarding teaching English for specific purposes. Additionally, this study intends to provide recommendations for improving the effectiveness of English instructions at university level. Potential for future research (Nguyen & Pham, 2016) could be expanded in various directions, such as focusing on ESP at specific universities or examining ESP across multiple universities in Vietnam. This would lead to more specific and easily implementable recommendations for improving ESP

instruction in Vietnam. Overall, this study highlighted a pressing issue in Vietnam's education system regarding English language instruction, its impact on employability, and proposes an empirical study with the goal of providing practical solutions.

On a broader perspective this project is also looking into the empowering of English in other non-English native countries to provide some guides to formulate the objectives for this project. In general, empowering of English in Southeast Asia countries is a multifaceted topic that has received attention from scholars across various fields including linguistics, education, and sociolinguistics. Below are summaries of some literature reviews that explore different aspects of this topic.

A chapter by Noor Azam and Salbrina S. (2015), available in *ASEAN Integration and the Role of English Language Teaching* provides an interesting approach to empowering English in a tiny nation of Brunei Darussalam. This approach is based on the Brunei-US English Enrichment Project for ASEAN and named as 11-week English Language Program (ELP). ELP was first run in September 2012. Each year, the program welcomes some 70 participants from the 10 ASEAN countries who spend seven weeks in Brunei and four weeks in Hawaii where they undertake a series of modules geared towards their professional needs. The participants are divided into two groups: the English teacher-trainers, and the officers and diplomats. The bulk of the modules are on English for Specific Purposes and topics covered include the language of negotiation and persuasion, action research, and English for networking. In addition to the English core modules, more specialized modules are also offered, such as Peoples and Cultures of ASEAN and Regional Issues in ASEAN. The goals of these modules are to promote understanding, increase awareness, and enhance appreciation of the cultural, social, and ethnic diversity within the region while also imparting knowledge on the current debates and issues surrounding the socio-political scene. The program has produced close to 130 alumni, many of whom have seen career progressions in terms of job promotions and

overseas job postings representing their governments. Others have gone on to Master 's or PhD studies in various countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

ASEAN Integration and the Role of ELT 2nd Ed by Richmond S. and Kelly K. (2015) examined the role of English in the context of ASEAN integration. It discusses the importance of English as a lingua franca for communication and collaboration among member states, as well as the challenges of language policy harmonization and English language proficiency. The review also explores the potential impact of ASEAN integration on English language education and language planning in the region. These literature reviews offer valuable insights into the complexities of empowering English in Southeast Asia, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges associated with the spread and use of English in the region. One statement of importance was about the disadvantages of Vietnamese officials would have to face in these ASEAN events if they lacked adequate English capacity to participate and contribute intelligibly to the development of communication.

Also highlighted in this article was that according to the founding director and senior advisor to Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project (NFL2020), the country does not have a qualified labor force to meet investors' needs and workers do not have the language skills needed to communicate effectively in an international working environment, although soft skills such as the ability to work together, decision making, presentation skills, how to speak up, and also critical thinking are among the qualities and skills that the labor force needs to develop.

In Thailand context, the article from Nutchai Oeamoum (2020) revealed a study conducted in Thailand regarding the challenges and needs related to English language teaching and learning highlighted the issues faced by pre-service English teachers and students at Institutes of Physical Education. This reveals serious concerns regarding students' language skills, along with moderate challenges in various aspects such as learning behaviors, curriculum, and teaching

methods. Both students and teachers identified needs including preparatory English courses, language skills practice, increased study hours, teaching aids, and teacher training.

Another study in Thailand examined English teaching problems and professional development needs among secondary school teachers in central Thailand. The study identified moderate challenges in areas such as teacher involvement, curriculum, assessment, and student background. Notably, students' lack of experience and perseverance in English practice contributed to their confidence issues in communication. While teachers expressed moderate needs for professional development, they showed a high level of interest in enhancing their English competencies and pedagogical strategies.

Nutcha Oeamoum's study aimed to explore the problems and needs in English language teaching (ELT) of preservice English teachers in Thailand in three aspects 1) curriculum and content, 2) instructional materials, and 3) teaching methods. The participants were thirty fourth-year pre-service English teachers from five universities located in Northern, Central, Northeastern, and Eastern Thailand. The findings revealed that the problems and needs in ELT related to curriculum and content were insufficient number of study hours of each English course, inadequate courses for specific English skills, outdated curriculum, and inapplicable content to the real life. Therefore, the participants needed the curriculum focusing on real-world context and communication skills (e.g. speaking and listening skills). The main problems related to instructional materials were non-diverse, insufficient, and ineffective teaching aids, so the participants required teachers to use diverse instructional materials and integrated web-based technology in English classes. On the teachers' side, the major problems and needs are related to teaching methods included lack of specialists in teaching specific courses and uninteresting teaching technique focusing on lecturing grammar rules and reading rather than practicing communication skills hence, the pre-service English teachers mainly expressed the needs to learn using games, role play, and oral presentation as these methods were interesting

and could increase opportunities to produce target language.

According to Khoiroini M. Y., et al (2020), the ELT Trends in Asia is the practice of teaching and learning English to students in Asian countries. English learning teaching trends in Asia have a significant role to improve English skills. Some of the aspects they encountered include early grades, class hours, national curriculum, textbooks, teaching media, use of computers, university entrance exams, teachers, higher education English, and related problems and concerns. ELT practice in Asia in the 1960s has a paradigm new teaching method called communicative language teaching. Most of the teachers, no matter what experience they have, published their material, then the example of it is the textbook. Besides using textbooks, teachers also write their material. Content-Based Instructions, this is not a method but an approach or curriculum framework. This involves teaching-learning objectives and teaching-learning activities and ideas that can be applied to language teaching. Some media that can be used to improve English skills are Podcast, Duolingo, and Rosetta. Then the best countries to teach English are China, South Korea, and Japan.

In learning English in Asia there are generally three human factors involved, the first is the student, the second is the teacher, and the last is the parent. In Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and Indonesia, the lack of motivation to learn English for secondary students in rural areas is a very serious problem today. In addition, it is also quite difficult to grow really qualified English teachers in Asia, especially in the UAE, Korea, Israel, China, Sri Lanka, Japan, Pakistan, Indonesia, India, the Philippines, and Thailand. Lack of training for teachers is a factor that causes this problem. This lack of trained teachers creates a gap in the quality of education in urban and rural areas, this gap is common in Malaysia and Sri Lanka. The last factor is parents, many rural area parents do not support their children to learn English, there are even parents who seem to let their children not learn English as if it is not important. On top of that, there seems to be always a lack of place or environment to frequently speaking English in Indonesia,

China, and Taiwan, even ESL countries such as the UAE and Hong Kong experience the same problem. According to the findings by Aziz and Kashinathan (2021), the challenges to speak good English among the students in institutes of higher learning are found to be very relevant to the situation in Vietnam,

The core challenges faced by learners in speaking English in Malaysia can be summarized as follows: (1) Lack of confidence: Many learners struggle with speaking English due to a lack of confidence in their language abilities. This lack of confidence hampers their willingness to engage in English-speaking activities; (2) Fear of making mistakes: Learners often fear making mistakes when speaking English, which leads them to avoid using the language altogether or resorting to their native language for communication; (3) Limited vocabulary: Another challenge is the limited vocabulary of learners, which impedes their ability to carry out conversations effectively. A working knowledge of common English words is essential for communication, but many learners lack this vocabulary; (4) Mother tongue interference: The influence of the learners' native language poses a significant challenge in speaking English.

Learners tend to rely on their mother tongue for speech output and may even translate instructions from English to their native language; (5) Lack of exposure: Students may not have sufficient exposure to English outside of the classroom, especially if they come from non-English-speaking communities or rural areas. This lack of exposure contributes to their difficulty in developing English language proficiency; (6) Need for reformation: The study suggests that long-term exposure to English alone does not guarantee language proficiency. There is a need for reform in the educational system to ensure that students, particularly those from rural areas, to have the opportunity to develop their English language skills effectively. Overall, these challenges highlight the complexity of learning to speak English and the importance of addressing various factors such as confidence building, vocabulary development, and creating environments conducive to English language learning. The limited

vocabulary of learners emerges as the primary hurdle in their English-speaking endeavors.

Malaysian students' reluctance to engage with the language stems from deep-seated shyness, diffidence, and a fear of ridicule, hindering their progress and psychological growth. The prevailing social stigma further exacerbates this issue, as speaking English may be equated with a lack of national pride. Encouraging active participation in English-speaking activities within a supportive educational environment is imperative. English teachers play a pivotal role in fostering interactive, student-centered classrooms and employing innovative techniques, such as gamification, to stimulate interest in language acquisition. Collaborative efforts between school administrators, teachers, and parents are essential in creating a nurturing environment conducive to English language development. Urgent intervention is necessary to address the alarming decline in spoken English proficiency among Malaysia's youth, necessitating a concerted effort to revitalize English language education.

Aziz and Kashinathan (2021) also pointed out that Malaysian ESL curriculum has undergone several reforms based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is a benchmark for students' and instructors' language competency levels that allows for comparisons between Malaysia and other nations (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). The CEFR was adopted to set international standards for foreign language education in order to suit the needs of language learners, academics, and other professions involved in language evaluation, teaching, and learning. The CEFR outlines what language learners must do in order to converse in a language. This article provides insights for English teachers, English supervisors, administrators, and Ministry of Education staff to overcome these challenges in developing EFL learners' learning and speaking skills.

Darmi et al. (2017) in an article stated according to the Malaysian English According to the CEFR Language Education Roadmap, preschool students should earn A1, primary school

students should achieve A2, secondary school students should achieve B1 or B2, post-secondary students should achieve B2, and university students should obtain B2 or C1 upon graduation. In terms of English language competency, this means that between now and 2025, the ministry anticipates an increasing number of Malaysian students from all socioeconomic groups to attain the CEFR-set goal proficiency level for each stage of education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

In recent years, the number of Vietnamese students pursuing international education has surged that studying abroad has become increasingly popular among Vietnamese students seeking to broaden their horizons and enhance their academic and personal growth. This trend reflects the growing interest in studying abroad and the desire to experience different cultures. This literature review aims to delve into the various benefits associated with studying abroad for Vietnamese students, considering both academic and non-academic aspects. This literature review explores the motivations behind Vietnamese students' decision to study overseas and delve into factors influencing their immigration intentions.

Understanding Vietnamese students' motivations and immigration intentions is crucial for policymakers, educators, and host countries. By addressing these factors, this research is partly aimed to see the opportunities that can create a more supportive environment for Vietnam students seeking to be at international level for enhancing cross-cultural exchanges.

Top perceptible academic benefits for the Vietnamese students enrolling into abroad studying programs are access to quality education, exposure to diverse learning environments, and enhanced language proficiency. In accessing to quality education, many Vietnamese students choose to study abroad to gain access to top-notch educational institutions renowned for their academic excellence. A study by Thuy Hong Cao et. Al. (2021) found that Vietnamese students often seek programs that offer superior academic resources and faculty expertise unavailable in their home country. In exposure to diverse learning environments, studying abroad exposes

Vietnamese students to diverse teaching methodologies, cultural perspectives, and academic challenges. According to Thi Thanh Binh Nguyen (2022), this exposure fosters adaptability and critical thinking skills, contributing to a well-rounded education. As for enhancing language proficiency, immersion in an English-speaking environment or other foreign languages can ensure significant improvement in Vietnamese students' language proficiency. As highlighted in the research by Tran (2019) suggested that studying abroad facilitates language acquisition through everyday interactions, academic coursework, and cultural immersion.

Professional development is another area of benefit for students going for abroad education. This benefit can come in three major forms: global networking opportunities, cultural competence and global awareness, and increased employability. Global networking opportunities allow students studying abroad in enabling them to connect with peers, mentors, and professionals from around the world. Nguyen and Le (2021) argue that these global networks can open doors to international career opportunities and collaborations.

Cultural competence and global awareness mean exposing students to diverse international cultures as crucial attribute in today's interconnected world. David Allan et al. (2020) emphasize that cross-cultural experiences foster empathy, tolerance, and a broader worldview, essential for success in the global marketplace. Employers in Vietnam often value the international experience a student gained through studying abroad. Research by Lan Hoang et al (2018) indicates that Vietnamese graduates with study abroad experience are perceived as more adaptable, culturally sensitive, and capable of navigating diverse work environments, giving them a competitive edge in the job market.

In the context of personal growth, according to Do (2020), those students with abroad studying experiences are deemed to gain advantages in independence and self-confidence, in cultural immersion and identity development, and in expanded perspectives and global citizenship.

Independence and self-confidence gained in studying abroad encourages Vietnamese students to step out of their comfort zones, fostering independence, self-reliance, and self-confidence. Pham M et al (2018) observes that navigating daily life in a foreign country, from managing finances to navigating public transportation, cultivates resilience and problem-solving skills. Cultural immersion and identity development allows Vietnamese students to reflect on their own cultural identity and values. According to Vu (2022), studying abroad prompts self-discovery and personal growth as students navigate cultural differences, confront stereotypes, and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others. In expanded perspectives and global citizenship, whereby students are exposing to diverse perspectives and global challenges thus encourages Vietnamese students to become active global citizens. Le et al (2023) suggest that studying abroad inspires a sense of responsibility towards addressing global issues such as climate change, social inequality, and human rights violations, motivating students to contribute positively to society.

Studying abroad offers a multitude of benefits for Vietnamese students, Tarn V (2021) stated that benefits ranging from academic enrichment and professional development to personal growth and global citizenship. By embracing the opportunities and challenges of studying in a foreign country, Vietnamese students can expand their horizons, enhance their skills, and become more engaged citizens of the world.

Several push and pull factors drive Vietnamese students to seek education beyond their home country. While studying abroad is the primary goal for most Vietnamese students, immigration intentions also play a role. These factors can be summarized with relevant descriptions under “Motivation Factor Description” as below:

Academic Excellence: This factor is driving students to aspire to study in countries known for their high-quality education systems.

Cultural Exposure: The desire to immerse themselves in new cultures and broaden their

horizons motivates students to go abroad.

Career Opportunities: In AbES it looks at factors of career opportunities in the aspect of opening better job prospects and global networking opportunities.

Language Proficiency: Students aim to enhance their language skills by living in an environment where the target language is spoken.

Personal Growth: Allowing the students to experience living independently to fosters personal development.

Economic Considerations: Economic stability and job prospects influence the students' long-term plan.

Introduction to Community and Context

This section is to situate FPT University's initiative in offering the Abroad English Semester (AbES) program. The Vietnam Ministry of Educational and Training (MOET) is actively implementing the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project (the 2020 Project) to enhance foreign language education in Vietnam. The 2020 Project was approved in September 2008 and was implemented starting from 2010. The objective of the 2020 Project is a crucial initiative to elevate the quality of English language education at all education levels in Vietnam. The ultimate goal/aim of the 2020 Project is to equip most Vietnamese students, from secondary schools to universities, with the ability to use a foreign language (primarily English) for daily communication, study, and work. The targeted proficiency level is IELTS 4.5-5. Challenges faced by VN Government on National Foreign Language Scheme (NFLS) include high ambitious targets, difficulties in achieving proficiency goals, and the subsequent decision to extend objectives into 2025. The amendment in policy underscores the government's commitment to improving foreign language education in Vietnam. NFLS implemented for nine years, received significant public attention and feedback. A review in late 2016 concluded that

the government's language proficiency targets set for the project were deemed overly ambitious. The MOET acknowledged that the NFLS, which received an investment of over VND4.2 trillion for the 2008-2016 period, had not succeeded.

The Vietnam government adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): Learning, Teaching, Assessment to establish its own English Language Proficiency Framework under the project. CEFR is the result of over ten years of research by several leading applied linguists and pedagogical specialists from countries within the European Union. The product is a contribution to applied linguistics, syllabus, and test design. The framework provides a common basis for the collaboration of syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks. CEFR is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries. The CEFR is also intended to make it easier for educational institutions and employers to evaluate the language qualifications of candidates for education admission or employment. Its main aim is to provide a method of learning, teaching, and assessing that applies to all languages in Europe. The Vietnam government adopted this framework with the objective for all university graduates not majoring in foreign languages to attain level B1 in the Framework. However, according to a MOET survey in 2015, only one in five students achieved the targeted B1 level.

Due to these challenges, the government decided to extend some of the language learning and teaching objectives to 2025. On December 22, 2017, the Vietnamese government approved Decision No. 2080/QĐ-TTg, amending and supplementing the project for the period 2008 to 2020. The newly amended project emphasizes the continuation of the new foreign language curriculum at all academic levels and aims to enhance English proficiency among students to meet the demands of studying and working, with the goal of achieving foreign language universalization by 2025.

FPT University, a leading educational institution in Vietnam Mekong Delta region, is committed to providing high-quality education and fostering global perspectives among its students. As part of this commitment, FPTU initiated the AbES program in 2020, which offers students a unique opportunity to enhance their language skills, cultural awareness, and academic experiences. The AbES program is designed for FPTU students who wish to immerse themselves in an English-speaking environment. This program caters to students seeking to:

- Enhance their English language proficiency: Through real-world practice, students can refine their communication skills, gaining fluency, and confidence in abroad environment.
- Expand their global perspective: Living and learning abroad broadens students' understanding of different cultures, fostering adaptability and intercultural competence.
- Boost their academic and professional prospects: The program equips students with valuable transferable skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and independence, sought after by employers in a globalized job market.

FPTU sets the stage for an enriching abroad experience by:

- Strong Academic Partnerships: FPTU collaborates with reputable universities abroad, ensuring high-quality English language instruction and a diverse academic environment.
- Tailored Curriculum: The program offers a blend of language courses, cultural immersion activities, and elective subjects to cater to various interests and learning styles.
- Supportive Learning Environment: Students benefit from dedicated faculty support, academic advisors, and cultural orientation programs to ensure a smooth transition and successful learning experience.

Beyond academics, FPTU fosters a vibrant international community by:

- Engaging Activities: The program organizes cultural excursions, social events, and

volunteer opportunities, allowing students to connect with locals and explore their host country.

- **Safe and Secure Environment:** FPT University prioritizes student safety by providing comprehensive support services, including pre-departure guidance, emergency contact information, and on-site assistance.

Moreover, FPTU has adopted the followings for situating the AbES program within the international development context:

a) **Globalization and the Demand for English Language Skills:**

It cannot not be denied that in today's globalized world, English proficiency is a critical skill for academic success, career advancement, and effective communication across cultures. The AbES program addresses this need by equipping students with the English language skills required to participate in international academic exchanges, collaborate with global teams, and navigate the international job market.

b) **Promoting Intercultural Understanding and Global Citizenship:**

International development goals increasingly emphasize the importance of intercultural understanding and fostering global citizens. The AbES program contributes to these goals by providing students with the opportunity to live and learn in a new cultural environment. This fosters empathy, adaptability, and the ability to collaborate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

c) **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

The AbES program aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations. These include:

- Quality Education (SDG 4): By enhancing English language skills and providing access to international education opportunities.
- Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8): By equipping students with the skills and experiences needed to succeed in a globalized job market.
- Global Partnerships (SDG 17): By fostering collaboration between FPT University and partner universities abroad.

d) Fostering International Cooperation and Knowledge Exchange:

The program promotes international cooperation between universities, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices in education. This collaboration can contribute to advancements in teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and international student support services.

Overall, the AbES program at FPTU contributes to the international development context by equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a globalized world, promoting intercultural understanding and global citizenship, aligning with the United Nations' SDGs, and fostering international cooperation and knowledge exchange between universities.

While the AbES program at FPTU directly aligns more with international development goals championed by organizations like the United Nations, there isn't a direct programmatic connection with UNICEF. However, FPTU sees it as a connection by having the value of the program's outcomes on the future lives and careers of students, which indirectly shall align with UNICEF's goals for child rights and development. FPT University recognizes the importance of education in empowering young people, aligning with UNICEF's mission of promoting child rights. The AbES program equips students with the English language skills

and global perspective necessary to thrive in a globalized world. By enhancing their employability and fostering global citizenship, the program indirectly contributes to UNICEF's goals of empowering youth and building a more just world. Here are some potential approaches that FPTU may investigate:

- a) UNICEF's Focus on Education: Through its AbES program, shares UNICEF's commitment to empowering young people in Mekong Delta by equipping them with the relevant skills they need to reach their full potential.
- b) Indirect Alignment with UNICEF Goals: Empowering the youth through AbES program to equip themselves with valuable skills and knowledge, enhancing their employability and future career prospects. This can lead to improved socio-economic opportunities, which aligns with UNICEF's goal of empowering youth and reducing child poverty. On the aspect of Global Citizenship, by fostering intercultural understanding and global awareness, the program contributes to building responsible global citizens who can advocate for a more just and equitable world, indirectly supporting UNICEF's child rights agenda.
- c) Focus on FPT University's Contribution: Maintain the primary focus on how FPTU's program benefits its students and prepares them for a successful future and establish the alignment with UNICEF's broader goals to showcase the program's positive impact that extends beyond language learning.

As a program leader for the AbES program I managed to learn a lot from other organizations involved in similar programs or development practice learning environments. Here are some of them:

Best Practices:

- Curriculum Design: Research how other programs integrate important and relevant development concepts into their English language curriculum.
- Partnerships and Experiential Learning: Learn from successful partnerships with local NGOs, community development projects, or volunteer organizations that other programs have established.
- Pre-Departure and Post-Program Support: Explore how other programs provide cultural sensitivity training, mentorship opportunities, or alumni networks to support student learning and career development.
- Program Evaluation and Assessment: Review how other programs measure the effectiveness of their development practice learning environment and gather feedback from students and partners.

Connecting with Relevant Organizations:

- International Education Associations: Connect with associations like the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) or the Forum on Education Abroad (FEA) to access resources and best practices related to study abroad programs.
- Development Organizations: Reach out to NGOs, international development agencies, or social enterprises to explore potential partnerships and volunteer opportunities for program participants.
- Universities with Development Programs: Collaborate with universities offering development studies programs to co-create curriculum content, exchange ideas on experiential learning, or explore joint faculty development initiatives.

Sharing Expertise with Others:

The AbES program at FPTU has valuable knowledge to share with other organizations:

- **English Language Skills for Development:** FPTU can showcase its approach to integrating English language learning with development concepts, potentially inspiring other programs.
- **Cultural Exchange and Global Citizenship:** The program's focus on fostering intercultural understanding and global citizenship can be a valuable model for other organizations working in international education or development.
- **Adapting to a New Context:** FPTU's experience in managing an English language program abroad can offer insights for other organizations looking to develop similar programs in new cultural environments.
- **Mentorship and Collaboration:** Offer mentorship or collaboration opportunities to program leaders at other universities who are looking to develop a development practice learning environment within their study abroad programs.

By actively seeking knowledge from other organizations and sharing the program's expertise, the program leader can foster a culture of continuous improvement and position the AbES program as a leader in development practice learning environments within the context of international education.

Stakeholder Analysis and Strategy

It should be mentioned here that this program may not have been seriously put into action across the Mekong Delta region due to various social, economy, and political reasons. The major regions are those surrounding the FPTU Can Tho campus, surrounding the Hanoi campus, and those surrounding the Ho Chi Minh City campus. There may be other related

programs that existed sporadically across the Mekong region within those more densely populated areas. The existing programs have considered in engaging the following stakeholders for the holistic success of "Empowering English Proficiency" in the Vietnam Mekong Delta.

The major stakeholder's analysis and strategy are given in Table 1:

Table 1: Stakeholder Analysis and Strategy

Stakeholder	Priority	Person/Organization Involved	Relation to the Project	How To Engage	Incentive / Risk
Government and Ministry of Education and Training	1	Organization responsible for setting education policies, curriculum standards, and allocating resources for English language education.	They shall oversee the implementation of language programs.	Through university official invitation or linkages	Incentive: Insight into the most relevant policies. Risk: May involved classified documents.
Educational Institutions	2	Including schools, colleges, and universities.	They are responsible for designing and delivering English language courses, hiring qualified teachers, and ensuring quality education per the policies affirmed by government and Ministry of Education & Training.	Through university official invitation or linkages. Collaboration in this research.	Incentive: Peer-to-peer collaboration is easy Risk: Some concern on P&C issues in the collaborations.
Teachers and Educators	3	They are the frontliners of English language education.	Qualified and motivated teachers are essential for effective learning outcomes	Direct or indirect contact	Incentive: Teachers can gain insight views on ETL Risk: Low risk
Students and Learners	4	Direct stakeholders participating and engaging in the learning process for improving English proficiency.	Their motivation, effort, and enthusiasm are key factors.	Direct or indirect contact	Incentive: Strong basis to understand their needs to learn English Risk: No or very low risk
Parents and Families	5	Playing a significant role in supporting a child's education to greatly enhance proficiency.	Encouraging language learning at home and providing relevant resources.	Direct or indirect contact	Incentive: Understanding the parental needs to support Risk: No cooperative parents' needs.

Professional Associations and Language Advocacy Groups	6	These professional organizations that promote the importance of English proficiency.	Provide resources for both teachers and learners with respect to English proficiency.	Inviting them to be a collaborator	Incentive: Obtaining profession views & strategies Risk: May involve P&C matters
Community and Social Organizations Local Communities and Civic Leaders	7	Those supporting English language learning. Those that can promote language learning initiatives.	May advise through workshops, events, and cultural exchange programs. Creating a supportive environment for learners.	Direct enquiries. Official invitation.	Incentive: Direct involvement of English usages and solicit incentives in kinds Risk: Not many such communities exist.
Embassies and Cultural Exchange Programs	8	They facilitate cultural exchange opportunities, and language immersion programs.	Provide good resources for learning English.	Official invitation	Incentive: Good source of resources Risk: May need lengthy procedures.

Some descriptions on the major stakeholders and their major roles are given below:

Government Authorities and Education Departments:

- Ministry of Education: Responsible for overseeing and implementing educational policies.
- Local Education Departments: Manage education at the regional level and may be involved directly or indirectly in implementation.

Educational Institutions:

- Schools and Universities: Act as implementing partners, providing the infrastructure and personnel for the program/campaign.
- English language departments: Directly involving in curriculum development and teaching.

Teachers and Educators:

- English teachers: Primary implementers of the program, responsible for delivering

quality English-based education.

- Teacher training institutions: Involved in teacher training and professional development.

Students and Parents:

- Students: Beneficiaries of the program, directly impacted by improved English proficiency.
- Parents: Important stakeholders as they may be directly involved in supporting and encouraging their children's education.

Community Leaders and Organizations:

- Local community leaders: Advocate for the program and mobilize community support.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs): Potentially involved in strategies implementation, especially in terms of resources and support.

Media:

- Local media outlets: Play a role in raising awareness and promoting the program.
- Educational publishers: Involved in providing learning materials for learning English.

Civil Society:

- Advocacy groups: Support the program through awareness campaigns and policy advocacy.

Donors and Funding Agencies:

- Entities providing financial support: Critical for the program's implementation and sustainability.

Table 2 illustrates how I contextualize my role as International Affairs Executive leading the “Abroad English Semester Program”, taking into consideration the different stakeholders’ perspectives.

Table 2: Stakeholders' Perspectives

Stakeholder	Group	Stakeholder's Perspective
Internal Stakeholders	University Administration	<p>UA will be looking into the program's alignment with the university's strategic goals, the program's contribution to the university's internationalization goals, potential for attracting new students, and enhancing the university's international reputation, and provide valuable educational experiences for students.</p> <p>The major concerns on UA perspective shall be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How the program aligns with the university's overall strategic goals for internationalization, student recruitment, and academic reputation. – About the program's financial sustainability in terms of budget projections, return on investment, and program growth. – On student well-being, their academic success, and the student abroad risk management. – On metrics and evaluation in seeing plans for tracking program outcomes, for gathering feedback from all stakeholders, for demonstrating program's impact on university's goals.
	Faculty	<p>The faculty members are seeing the opportunity for contributing to curriculum development, potentially participating in program activities, and additional development to their teaching expertise.</p> <p>However, they could be having much concern on these elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Workload: Concerning taking on additional responsibilities without proper compensation or reduced teaching loads. – Curriculum Alignment: Concerning if the program curriculum doesn't align well with existing English or language courses. – Student Support: Concerning a clear policy and set of procedures about student support services available during the program, especially for language barriers or academic needs. – Budget: Concerning the faculty budget to adequately support the program.

	<p>International Affairs Office (Study Abroad Office and the Student Service Office)</p>	<p>They shall be having opportunities in leading the program to showcase their expertise and expand their offerings in international partnerships, student support, and program logistics.</p> <p>The concerns in this group of stakeholders shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Workload: Increased workload due to program administration, student support, and potential logistical challenges. – Resource Allocation: Concerns having adequate resources (budget, time, capacity) to effectively manage the program. – Communication and Coordination: Ensuring smooth communication and coordination between different departments involved in the program. – How the program complements existing student support services. – How they can collaborate to ensure a smooth and enriching experience for participants.
--	---	---

External Stakeholders	Partner Universities and Host Communities	<p>The PUs is to take the role as a facilitator who will connect their faculty with my university. The host communities are acting as a bridge between students and the local community, emphasizing their commitment to cultural exchange, promoting positive student-community interaction, and fostering other academic relationships. The elements of importance to this group of stakeholders could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Student Recruitment: Seeing the program to attract international students to their institutions, generating revenue and diversifying their student body. – Faculty Exchange and Collaboration: Seeing opportunity for faculty exchange programs, joint research projects, and fostering academic collaborations. – Cultural Exchange and Internationalization: Seeing the potential in promoting cultural exchange and enhancing their institution's international profile. <p>However, the PUs and the host communities may have these concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Academic Quality: Concerned about the academic quality of the curriculum offered in the AbES program. – Student Support: Assurances from my university to provide adequate support services (academic, cultural, and social) for students during their semester abroad. – Administrative Burdens: Is about the workload associated with managing incoming students, program logistics, and potential administrative complexities. – Financial Benefits: Clarity on revenue sharing or financial arrangements related to the program implementation. – Impact on Local Resources: Host communities might be concerned about the strain program participants might place on local resources, such as housing availability or infrastructure.
	Parents / Guardians	<p>Parents/guardians are seeing me as their primary point of contact for program information, logistics, and support particularly in emphasizing their children's safety, academic success, and overall program experience. They will be focusing on clear lines of communication and seeing support systems are properly put in place. Parents and family members often have a</p>

		<p>mix of excitement and apprehensive about the program. While they see the potential benefits for their child's academic and personal growth, they'll also have significant concerns about safety, cost, and the overall well-being of their child abroad.</p> <p>As such, the parents/guardians reluctant to send their children to join the AbES program would like to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Transparency about Safety Measures: Safety measures in place, including emergency contact information, support services available abroad, and any cultural awareness training provided. – Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities: Promotion of any scholarships, financial aid options, or budget planning resources available to help their children to manage the program costs. – Academic Support and Continuity: Explanation on how the program curriculum integrates with their children's studies back home and provides information on academic support services available during the semester abroad. – Cultural Adjustment Resources: On workshops or resources to help the parents/guardians understand cultural differences and prepare for potential challenges of adapting to a new environment. – Parent Orientation Sessions: Organized information specifically for parents to address their concerns, answer questions, and provide clear communication channels throughout the program.
	Students	<p>The students' perspective is quite straightforward in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Academic and Personal Growth: The program for the opportunity to improve their English language skills in a real-world setting. – Cultural Immersion: Eager to experience a new culture, broaden their perspectives, and make connections with people from different backgrounds. – Travel and Adventure: Seeing an exciting chance to travel, explore a new place, and have unique experiences. – Career Advancement: Seeing the program to enhance their potential in an increasingly globalized job market. <p>However, it has been observed that most students are anxious about the followings:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cost: The program fees, travel expenses, and potential cost of living abroad. – Academic Integration: Worry about falling behind in their studies at home while participating in the program. – Language Proficiency: Concerned about their current English language level being sufficient for academic success and daily life abroad. – Safety and Adjustment: Anxieties about safety in a new country, adapting to a different culture, and feeling homesick.
	Other Potential External Stakeholders	Depending on the stakeholder (e.g., funding agencies, alumni), they might be interested in seeing relevant significant aspects of expertise, such as program management, budget oversight, or alumni engagement.
Other Considerations	Relaying Information	When speaking with each stakeholder group, emphasize the aspects of my role most relevant to their interests and concerns.
	Outcomes and Impact	Focus on the program's potential outcomes and positive impact for each stakeholder group.
	Collaboration and Communication	Highlight my commitment to collaboration and open communication with all stakeholders.
	Problem-Solving & Adaptability	My ability to address challenges and adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

In a program focusing on empowering English proficiency in the Vietnam Mekong Delta, various individuals and groups could take on activist roles to champion the cause. These activists, whether individuals or groups, are playing a crucial role in creating awareness, mobilizing resources, and advocating for policies that support the goals of empowering English proficiency in the younger generations. The major activists and their roles can be summarized as below:

Language Education Advocates: Professionals in the field of language education who actively promote the importance of English proficiency for personal and societal development.

Educational Reformers: Individuals who advocate for systemic changes in the education system to enhance the quality of English language instruction.

Community Leaders: Local leaders who understand the socio-economic benefits of improved English

proficiency and work to garner community support for language education initiatives.

Youth Activists: Students or young community members who are passionate about language education and work to mobilize their peers and communities.

Language Program Coordinators: Professionals responsible for designing and implementing language programs who actively advocate for the benefits of their initiatives.

Parent Advocacy Groups: Parents who actively engage with educational institutions and policymakers to ensure that English language programs receive the necessary support and resources.

Language Learning Experts: Linguists, language educators, and experts in English language acquisition who contribute their expertise to program development and improvement.

NGO Leaders: Heads of non-governmental organizations focused on education and language development who actively work towards empowering English proficiency in the region.

Government Representatives: Policymakers and politicians who champion the cause within the government, advocating for supportive policies and increased funding for language education.

A combination of strategies and campaigns have been observed to raise awareness, engage stakeholders, and ensure the success of the program. Implementing a combination of these strategies and campaigns seemed to create a holistic and impactful approach to empower English proficiency in the Mekong Delta (Vietnam side). The key is in engaging multiple stakeholders and tailor initiatives to the specific needs and characteristics of the local communities. Here are some strategies/approaches/campaigns that seem to sustain the program:

Awareness Campaigns:

Launching comprehensive awareness campaign using various media channels (TV, radio, print, online) to highlight the importance of English proficiency for personal and community development, featuring success stories, interviews, and educational programs that highlight the positive impact of English proficiency in the community.

Community Workshops and Seminars:

Organizing workshops and seminars in local communities to inform parents, students, and community members about the benefits of English proficiency and the details of the program.

Student Engagement Initiatives:

Implementing student-focused campaigns, such as language clubs, language competitions, and interactive events, to make language learning engaging and fun.

Parental Involvement Programs:

Establish events that encourage parents to actively participate in their children's language education, providing resources and guidance for supporting English learning at home.

Teacher Training and Development:

Conduct professional development programs for English teachers to enhance their teaching skills and introduce innovative and effective language teaching methodologies.

Online Learning Platforms:

Develop or leverage existing online platforms to provide accessible and interactive English language courses and resources for students and teachers.

Public-Private Partnerships:

Collaborate with local businesses and industries to create internship programs, job fairs, and opportunities for students to apply their English language skills in real-world scenarios.

Cultural Exchange Programs:

Establish partnerships with educational institutions or organizations from English-speaking countries to facilitate cultural exchange programs, fostering language immersion experiences.

Government Advocacy:

Advocate for policy changes and increased government funding for English language education, emphasizing the long-term benefits for economic development and global competitiveness.

By implementing these strategies with a focus on collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability, the program for English language empowerment in the Vietnam Mekong Delta can increase its chances of success and contribute to the development of language skills and opportunities in the region.

While the program to empower English proficiency in the Vietnam Mekong Delta seemed commendable, several challenges may arise that could impact its success. Understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial for effective implementation of the strategies. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and adaptive approach that involves collaboration between stakeholders, continuous community engagement, and a commitment to overcome barriers to English language empowerment in the Vietnam Mekong Delta. Some identified challenges can be briefly summarized here:

Limited Financial Resources:

Insufficient financial resources may hinder the development and execution of quality English language programs, including teacher training, curriculum development, and the provision of learning materials.

Infrastructure Constraints:

Inadequate infrastructure, including classrooms, technology, and internet access, may limit the effectiveness of language learning initiatives, particularly in remote or underdeveloped areas.

Teacher Shortages:

A shortage of qualified English teachers may impede the delivery of effective language instruction. Additionally, existing teachers may require further training to meet program objectives.

Cultural Perceptions:

Resistance or skepticism from communities regarding the perceived value of English proficiency, especially if it is seen as conflicting with traditional cultural values or languages, could pose a challenge.

Lack of Parental Involvement:

Inadequate engagement and support from parents in their children's education, particularly in reinforcing English language learning at home, may hinder student progress.

Language Accessibility:

Limited access to English language resources, including books, online materials, and language immersion opportunities, may restrict students' exposure to the language.

Diversity of Dialects:

The Mekong Delta region is linguistically diverse, with various local dialects spoken. This diversity can pose challenges in creating standardized English language programs that cater to the linguistic diversity of the population.

Policy and Regulatory Barriers:

Existing education policies and regulations may not be conducive to the effective implementation of English language programs. Advocacy for policy changes may be necessary.

Socioeconomic Disparities:

Socioeconomic disparities among students may result in unequal access to educational resources, creating challenges in ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to

excel in English proficiency.

Resistance to Change:

Resistance from traditional educational systems or communities to adopt new teaching methodologies or approaches could impede progress.

Retention of Skills:

Ensuring that students retain their English language skills over time requires ongoing reinforcement and practice, which may be challenging to maintain outside the classroom.

Needs Assessment

The Mekong Delta region in Vietnam has witnessed remarkable economic growth in recent years, positioning it as a vital contributor to the country's development. However, to sustain this growth and to compete on an international level, it is imperative that students in the region possess strong English language proficiency. The Abroad English Semester program in FPTU aims to bridge this gap by providing students with immersive experiences in English-speaking environments. This needs assessment seeks to identify the specific requirements and challenges faced by university students in the Mekong Delta region regarding English proficiency enhancement.

The students in FPTU are given the options to enroll into the Abroad English Semester (AbES) program. This AbES was offered as a mean to empowering the English proficiency for students at university level. Upon completing the AbES program, the outcomes of AbES are served as needs assessment to fulfill the gaps pre- and post- of the AbES program, to allocate the difficulties and challenges students may be facing in other regions of the globe, and to analyze & synthesize the change in their learning behavior. The main objectives of this needs assessment are:

- To understand the current proficiency levels of English among university students in the Mekong Delta region.
- To identify specific areas of improvement required to meet international standards.
- To determine the factors influencing the students' ability to learn English effectively.
- To assess the feasibility and potential impact of implementing the Abroad English Semester program in this context.
- To determine the right approach/pedagogy for teaching English.

Information from stakeholders will be gathered in the following way:

- a) Surveys: Conduct surveys among university students to gauge their current proficiency levels, identify their perceived challenges, and assess their interest in participating in the Abroad English Semester program.
- b) Interviews / Focus Group: Conduct interviews with English professors, university administrators, and students to gain deeper insights into the specific linguistic needs and potential barriers faced.
- c) World cafe: Organize open discussions to encourage open dialogue among students, allowing them to express their opinions on their English learning experiences.

Theory of Change

"Empowering English Proficiency: A Program to Excellence in the Vietnam Mekong Delta for Advancing English Proficiency for Future Generations" is a project that aims to inspire and empower students in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam by improving their English language proficiency. Through a range of activities that shall include online learning, classroom instruction, and language immersion programs. This project seeks to break down barriers to education and employment opportunities and equip students with the skills and knowledge they

need to thrive in a globalized world.

At the heart of the project's theory of change is the belief that every student deserves the opportunity to access quality English language instruction, and that by doing so, it can help to transform their lives and futures. By providing students with the tools, they need to communicate effectively in English; the project aims to empower them to pursue their dreams and aspirations, and to unlock a world of opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. The "Empowering English Proficiency" project is not merely an initiative; it is a program towards a brighter, more connected, and globally competitive Vietnam. The theory of change for the proposed program is conceptualized in Figure 1. The project shall work towards its goals through the following activities:

1) *Language Immersion Programs:*

The AbES program aims for immersive learning of English language that provides students with real-life opportunities in the overseas universities of higher learning to practice their English language skills. It seeks to build confidence and resilience, and to help students to see themselves as global citizens with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a rapidly changing world. By fostering an appreciation of different cultures and ways of life, the project aims to inspire students to become agents of change in their own communities, and to spread the power of language and education far and wide in the Mekong Delta region.

2) *Cultivating a Culture of Learning:*

This pivotal transformation is to bring along a change in Mekong Delata region by instilling a culture of learning within its communities. By organizing workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions, it is to inspire individuals (especially the young generation) to embrace English as a tool for empowerment. Through immersive experiences and engaging content, it is aimed to

ignite a passion for language acquisition, breaking down barriers and instilling confidence. To sustainable changes in culture of learning it requires the active involvement of the community. By fostering partnerships with local leaders, parents, and stakeholders, this can create a support system that champions the cause of English proficiency. This collaborative effort ensures that the benefits of this project spread through every layer of society.

3) *Nurturing Dedicated Educators:*

Teachers are the cornerstone of any educational endeavour. Through viable government policies to reform effective training, professional development, and mentorship programs, to equip educators with the skills and knowledge to inspire their students. By creating a network of passionate, empowered teachers, this initiative is to amplify the impact of this project manifold.

4) *Online Learning:*

Through engaging and interactive online learning resources (via IT technology), this project will provide students with the opportunity to develop their English language skills at their own pace and in their own time. By making English language learning accessible to the youth in mobile online mode, the project seeks to inspire students to take ownership of their own learning journey, and to discover the joy and power of English language for themselves.

5) *Classroom Instruction:*

Through high-quality classroom instruction delivered by qualified English language teachers, the project aims to create a supportive and nurturing learning environment in which students can thrive. By using a range of teaching methods/pedagogy to engage and motivate students, the project seeks to inspire a love of learning and a thirst for knowledge that will stay with them for a lifetime.

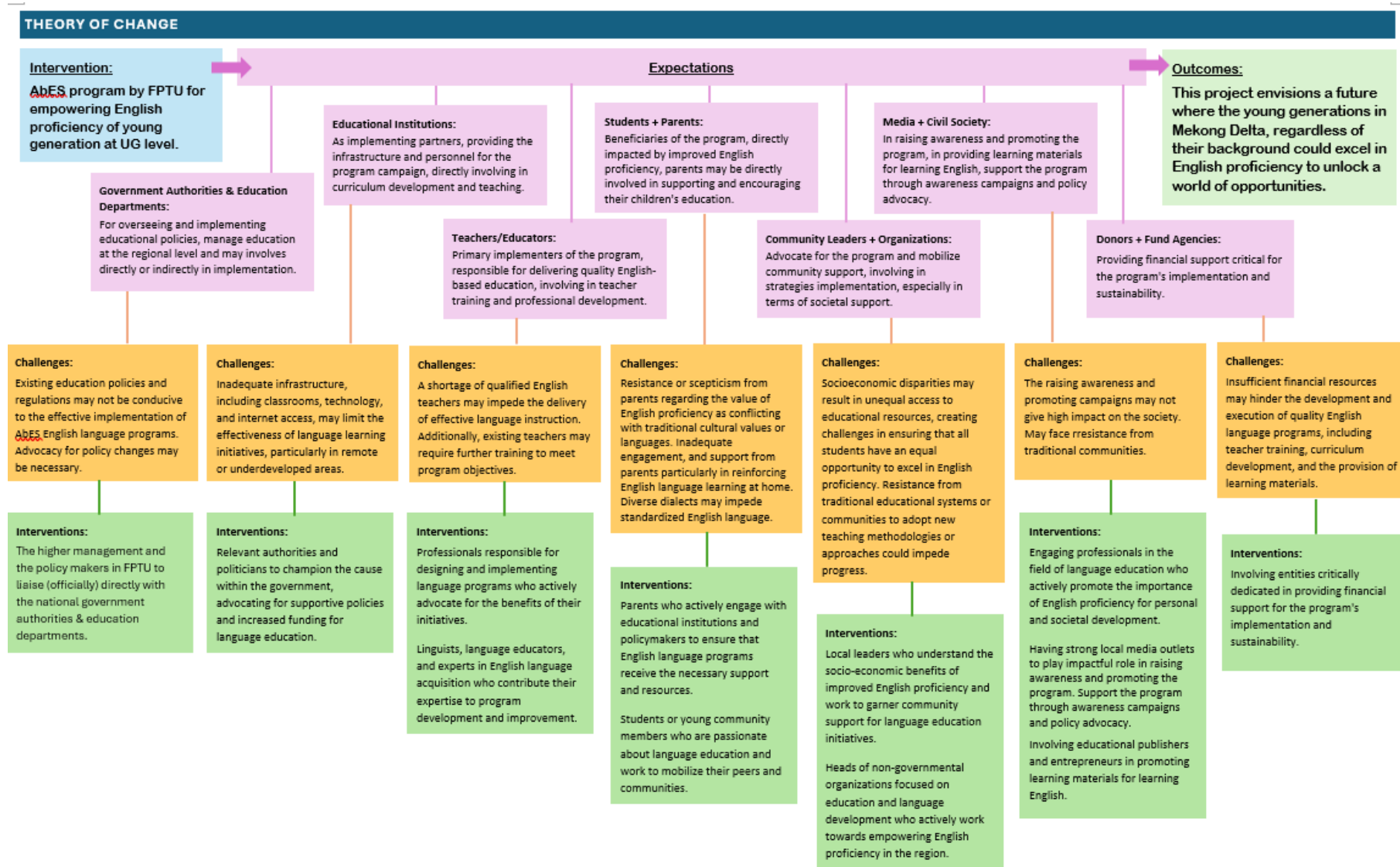


Figure 1: Conceptualized Theory of Change

6) *How Studying Abroad Empowers Vietnamese Students and Their Communities:*

Vietnam's growing economy and integration into the global market demand a skilled workforce equipped to navigate a diverse and interconnected world. Studying abroad offers Vietnamese students a unique opportunity to not only gain academic qualifications but also undergo a transformative experience that shapes their personal and professional lives. This project explores the benefits of studying abroad for Vietnamese students, focusing on the positive changes in their behaviour and community engagement through the lens of theory of change. In this context, the desired outcome is increased positive impact on Vietnamese communities driven by students who studied abroad. Many research works support the theory of change for studying abroad that can lead to:

- Increased Cultural Sensitivity whereby students develop an appreciation for different cultures and ways of thinking.
- Enhanced Critical Thinking Skills whereby exposing student to diverse viewpoints challenges students' assumptions and fosters critical analysis.
- Improved Leadership Qualities that international experiences help students develop confidence and communication skills necessary for leadership roles.
- Stronger Networking Opportunities allow students to build valuable connections that can benefit their future careers and contribute to international collaboration.

The article by (Gita Maharaja 2018) delved into the concept of intercultural competence, a crucial skill for navigating an increasingly interconnected world. It explains how studying abroad cultivates this competence by allowing students to develop empathy, openness, and the ability to bridge cultural divides, ultimately leading to a greater appreciation for diverse perspectives. It provides evidence that international experiences can enhance students' understanding and appreciation of different cultures. In a nutshell, the input to the theory of change is Vietnamese students participating in international education programs. The activities

closely tied to this change shall include the academic and cultural experiences these students undergo while studying abroad.

The expected outputs shall be the knowledge, skills, and personal development acquired by the students. On the behavioral outcomes, the changes may include enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills; increased intercultural competence and adaptability; development of leadership and communication skills; and growth in self-confidence and independence. The other impact can be the increased community engagement by the returning students through application of acquired skills to local projects, the advocacy for international education, the mentorship for future generations, and the contribution to a more globally minded Vietnamese society.

Studying abroad brings along significant personal and academic growth in the aspect of academic excellence whereby exposing to diverse teaching methodologies, cutting-edge research, and internationally recognized faculty can significantly enhance a student's academic foundation.

In the aspect of empowering English language: immersion in a foreign language environment fosters fluency and cultural understanding, opening doors to future career opportunities.

For intercultural competence: living and interacting with people from different backgrounds promotes tolerance, empathy, and the ability to navigate complex intercultural situations.

On critical thinking and problem-solving: international education often emphasizes critical thinking, encouraging students to question assumptions, analyze information, and find innovative solutions.

As pointed out by the article by (Nhật, H.T et. al. 2018) what critical thinking in a Vietnamese tertiary context, this article explores the concept of critical thinking in the Vietnamese education system and how it differs from approaches in Western contexts. It highlights the potential for studying abroad to bridge this gap by exposing Vietnamese students to diverse teaching methods that encourage critical analysis and questioning. Another article on critical thinking skill and its relationship with argumentative writing (Tuyen Son Nguyen, Huan Buu Nguyen 2020) suggested that exposure to different writing styles and academic environments abroad could enhance students' ability to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and develop their own critical voice. It also suggested that studying abroad, with its emphasis on debate, discussion, and defending one's ideas, could be a valuable tool for honing these skills. Additionally, the need to grapple with new concepts and perspectives in a foreign language could further encourage critical thinking.

In the perspective of independence and self-confidence: overcoming challenges of living in a new environment fosters self-reliance, resourcefulness, and a strong sense of self-confidence. More importantly, in *sharpening the leadership, communication skills, and professional development:* via collaborative learning environments and participation in student organizations hone leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. Opportunities to intern with international companies or participate in research projects enhance career prospects. The impact of studying abroad in developing leadership skill was highlighted in this article (John C Hill 2023) that examined the broader impact of international education on leadership development. While not specifically focused on Vietnamese students, it highlights how exposure to diverse cultures and working in multicultural teams abroad can hone communication skills, build cultural intelligence, and enhance problem-solving abilities – all crucial qualities for effective leadership.

On the impact on Vietnamese communities, the transformative experiences abroad shall motivate returning students to contribute positively to their communities thus to bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experiences that benefit their communities particularly in skilled workforce that students with international education are highly sought-after in the Vietnamese job market, contributing to economic growth and innovation.

In the context of knowledge transfer, the returning students can introduce new technologies, best practices, and international perspectives to their workplaces and educational institutions. For long-term benefits in the aspect of mentorship and advocacy, the returning students can become mentors and role models for younger generations, inspiring them to pursue international education opportunities. Community engagement by the returning students would be a strong platform for them to apply their acquired skills and experiences to address local needs, contributing to social development initiatives and fostering a more globally- minded Vietnamese society.

Studying abroad is a transformative experience that empowers Vietnamese students to become well-rounded individuals with a global perspective. Through the lens of theory of change, it's evident that by investing in international education, Vietnam can foster a generation of leaders, innovators, and changemakers who contribute significantly to the development of their communities and the nation as a whole.

However, there are these challenges in hand to be considered:

Firstly, *the financial accessibility*: the cost of studying abroad can be a significant barrier for Vietnamese students. Scholarships, financial aid programs, and work opportunities can help bridge this gap.

Secondly, *the cultural adjustment*: adapting to a new culture can be stressful. Pre-departure training and support networks can ease the transition.

Thirdly, *the academic integration*: different educational systems and teaching styles may require adjustments.

Fourthly, *the brain drains*: there's a risk of talented individuals not returning to Vietnam after their studies. Programs that encourage reverse brain drain by highlighting career opportunities in Vietnam can be implemented.

By addressing challenges and creating a supportive ecosystem, Vietnam can leverage international education as a powerful tool to drive positive social and economic change.

Through its focus on improving English language proficiency, the ToC of this project aims to achieve a range of outcomes that will transform the lives and futures of students in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. By breaking down barriers to education and employment opportunities, the project seeks to empower students to pursue their dreams and aspirations, and to make a positive difference in the world around them. By highlighting the achievements of learners, educators, and communities, a ripple effect of inspiration can be created. Success stories can serve as testimonials to the transformative power of education, motivating others to embark on their own journeys of growth.

Grounded in the belief that education is the cornerstone of progress, this project envisions a future where the young generations in Mekong Delta, regardless of their background could excel in English proficiency. "Empowering English Proficiency" is a project that is driven by a deep belief in the transformative power of education and language. By inspiring and empowering students to develop their English language skills, the project aims to unlock a

world of opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach, and to create a brighter and more hopeful future for generations to come. As such, the ToC for this research is thus to be illustrated in Figure 1 above.

Program Description

Introduction

Under the “Empowering English Proficiency” umbrella project, FPTU Can Tho campus is to undertake the implementation of a pilot program coined as Abroad English Semester (AbES) Program. This AbES is integrated into one of the process flows in preparing the students to attain a deep specialized English Level at undergraduate level. The website link for this project is available at: [Trường Đại học FPT - Official website of FPT University.](#)

As one of the AbES custodians I realized that a successful program would integrate academic learning with community engagement for creating a dynamic and enriching experience for students. The FPTU International Affair Department has the plan and road map to send 200 students per semester to overseas universities to sustain the AbES program. The roadmap includes program evaluation and refinement, cost analysis, curriculum review, partnership and funding exploration, participating in education fairs, and alumni network engagement. In addition to that, an ongoing continuous improvement and expansion plan is in place for student success tracking, community English program expansion, and cost-effective program management. Regular evaluation of the program's impact on both students and the community is crucial to ensure that the engagement is meaningful and reciprocal.

The impact of the AbES program is evaluated through quantitative survey (questionnaires) via the responses from the students, the partner university, and parents. The returning students are

invited to share the pros and cons of AbES to new batches of students planning or expecting to participate in this program. It is believed that these steps can enhance the AbES program in becoming a transformative experience for all involved, creating lasting bonds and a profound understanding of the host community's culture and language.

With the experience gained over the last 3 years, it is obvious that implementing the AbES program with community engagement in the partner universities can be highly effective if approached strategically. Firstly, designing clear learning outcomes and skills for the program is crucial. As such, FPTU AbES program holds a set of standard/general learning outcomes (LOs), and at the same time allows other LOs to be integrated into the standard LOs pertaining to the requirements from the partner universities. FPTU comprehends that explicit and clear LOs sets the foundation for meaningful students-community understanding in varieties of interaction and cultural immersion. Engaging with local communities through structured activities, such as service learning or community projects, allows students to apply their language skills in real-world contexts, fostering both linguistic and personal growth.

Additionally, building relationships within the community is to enhance the learning experience, as it provides deeper cultural insights and a supportive environment for language practice. It's also beneficial to plan for long-term community development, identify priorities, and mobilizing resources to ensure the program's sustainability and mutual benefit.

From the program provider's perspective, the AbES program offers a wealth of learning opportunities to the UGs. As the program organizer/coordinator, I gained insights into the complexities of cross-cultural communication and the importance of cultural sensitivity when we are helping with the students in their respective host universities.

We must know appropriate ways to navigate the logistical challenges of coordinating international education programs, such as visa regulations, accommodation arrangements, and curriculum integration. The organizers must develop an understanding of the academic and personal growth outcomes for participants, which form future program improvements. Relevant faculty members in FPTU need to observe the development of students' global competencies and intercultural communication skills, which are a vital outcome pertaining to this program. By facilitating this AbES program, the organizers contribute to the broader educational mission of fostering global citizenship and intercultural understanding among students.

In facilitating the AbES program it is common to face a myriad of challenges that require careful planning and adaptability. One of the primary challenges is ensuring cultural sensitivity and providing support for students as they navigate cultural shock and language barriers. Financial management is also a significant concern, as organizers must balance the program's cost with the need to make it accessible to a diverse student body. Additionally, logistical hurdles such as securing visas, arranging accommodations, and coordinating with foreign institutions can be complex and time-consuming. Organizers must also be prepared to address homesickness and social integration issues, helping students to build a supportive community while away from home. Moreover, maintaining academic standards and ensuring that the curriculum is relevant and engaging in a different cultural context is crucial for the success of the program and the educational growth of the students.

From the experience gained after sending few batches of FPTU students to the international host universities, to enhance the student experience in the AbES program, FPTU organizers are focusing on several key areas. Firstly, providing a comprehensive orientation that includes

language support services, cultural adjustment guidance, and safety information can significantly ease the transition for students. Secondly, encouraging participation in local events and facilitating connections with native speakers to enrich the learning experience. Additionally, integrating technology through approved online learning resources can offer flexible and interactive ways for students to improve their English skills. Thirdly, regular feedback sessions help address any concerns promptly, ensuring a responsive and supportive learning environment. Lastly, creating a buddy system with proficient English speakers to provide a more personalized and practical approach to language acquisition. AbES program facilitators and coordinators believe that by implementing these strategies, the program organizers can create a more immersive and supportive experience that can lead to better language outcomes and overall satisfaction.

Problem Statement

Some problem statements for the Abroad English Semester program aiming for the Mekong Delta youth are stated herewith:

- Youths in the Mekong Delta are facing limitations in their future careers and educational opportunities due to a lack of proficiency in English, the global language of communication. The AbES program aims to bridge this gap by providing immersive English language learning experiences.
- Mekong Delta youths, particularly those in rural areas, have limited access to high-quality English language education, hindering their ability to compete in the globalized job market. The AbES program provides an equalizing opportunity for rural youth to gain necessary English skills for success.
- Youths in the Mekong Delta have limited exposure to international cultures and perspectives. The AbES program fosters cultural exchange and global awareness by

providing an opportunity to study English abroad, promoting intercultural understanding and preparing them to thrive in an interconnected world.

- The Mekong Delta region aspires for economic growth and integration into the global marketplace. Youths with strong English language skills are crucial for attracting foreign investment and driving regional economic development. The AbES program equips Mekong Delta youths with the necessary English language proficiency to become key players in the region's economic future.

The AbES Program

FPTU is to adopt the following strategies/approaches to implement "Abroad English Semester Program" as a commendable initiative for Vietnamese students in empowering their English proficiency through abroad studying experience.

A) *Program Design:*

Academic Focus: Offer a variety of courses beyond just general English. Include courses related to the students' majors or areas of interest to keep them engaged. Consider classes on business communication, creative writing, or English for specific fields like technology or healthcare. Identify common challenges and preferences regarding study abroad programs. Facilitate credit transfer processes and provide academic advising to ensure a seamless transition back to their home institution.

Language Immersion: Balance coursework with real-world language experiences. Organize homestay programs with native speakers, cultural excursions, and volunteer opportunities where students can practice their English in everyday situations.

Skill Development: Integrate practical skill development like public speaking, debate, and presentation workshops. This will boost confidence and fluency.

Curriculum Design: Develop a well-structured curriculum that balances language skills

(listening, speaking, reading, writing) and cultural immersion. To include practical language use scenarios such as academic discussions, presentations, and real-life interactions.

B) *Selection Process:*

English Proficiency Levels: Set clear English proficiency benchmarks for acceptance. Offer preparatory courses for students who almost meet the requirements.

Academic Performance: Consider students' academic records to ensure they can handle the demands of studying abroad.

Motivation and Goals: Conduct interviews or essays to assess students' motivation and goals for the program. This helps select students who will get the most out of the experience.

C) *Logistics and Support:*

Partner with Universities: Collaborate with universities in English-speaking countries that offer semester programs or have existing international student support structures. Collaborate with local universities or language schools in English-speaking countries and where possible arrange language exchange programs where Vietnamese students interact with native speakers. Negotiate partnerships to ensure affordability, academic quality, and cultural integration support for Vietnamese students.

Pre-departure Training: Provide workshops to prepare students for cultural differences, academic expectations, and practicalities like budgeting and travel. Regularly assess students' language proficiency using standardized tests (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL). Monitor progress through assignments, presentations, and participation. Address potential challenges and provide coping mechanisms.

Ongoing Support: Offer ongoing support services while students are abroad, including academic advising, mental health resources, and assistance with visa renewals or other issues. Establish a support network consisting of local staff, mentors, or peer advisors to

assist students during their stay abroad. Organize cultural activities like food fare classes, city tours, and visits to historical sites. Facilitate internships or volunteer opportunities in English-speaking workplaces. Encourage participation in extracurricular activities and events (as cultural immersion activities) to facilitate interactions with native speakers. Provide 24/7 emergency contact information.

D) *Additional Considerations:*

Financial Aid: Explore scholarship opportunities or payment plans to make the program accessible to a wider range of students.

Post-Program Integration: Facilitate re-entry programs or workshops to help students integrate their abroad experience into their academic and personal lives back in Vietnam. Encourage them to share their experiences and insights with their peers. *Alumni Network:* Create an alumni network for past program participants to stay connected, share experiences, and offer mentorship to future students. Foster connections for future career prospects.

Evaluation and Feedback: Gather feedback from students, faculty, and partners to continuously improve the program's effectiveness and relevance.

Sustainability and Expansion: Develop strategies for long-term sustainability, including securing funding sources and building strategic partnerships. Explore opportunities to expand the program to reach more students and offer additional destinations or program formats.

FPTU does acknowledge that each student's learning journey is unique. Flexibility, adaptability, and personalized support are key to a successful AbES program. FPTU believes that these strategies, in tandem with one of FPTU missions, can create an "Abroad English Semester Program" that effectively empowers Vietnamese students to improve their English language skills and gain valuable international experience.

Empowering English proficiency in the Mekong Delta region is a program intended at improving the English language skills of the local population in Vietnam in a long-term basis (perhaps over generations) to unlock opportunities, foster development, and promote global integration in this culturally and economically significant region. This program to empower English proficiency can have far-reaching positive effects on education, employment, cultural exchange, and community development, ultimately contributing to the region's overall growth and sustainability. Over the years, the approaches that have been observed to yield some positive outcomes include (1) Community direct engagement in language education plans, (2) Public and private sectors collaboration (sectors directly or indirectly linked to education), (3) Technology integration for monitoring and evaluation of English proficiency (in the more recent years that involved the deployment of IT/ICT/Computer technology).

Some notable results of the program may be summarized as below:

Global Communication and Collaboration:

English is widely recognized as a global language and is commonly used as a medium of communication in international business, academia, and diplomacy. Empowering English proficiency has enhanced the region's ability to engage in global conversations, collaborate with international partners, and participate in the global economy (more so in the hospitality/tourism industry).

Educational Opportunities:

Proficiency in English is reckoned in opening a range of educational opportunities for individuals, especially the young generations, in the Vietnam side of Mekong Delta. Many prestigious universities and academic programs use English as the medium of instruction. Enhancing English skills has enabled students increase access to scholarships, exchange programs, and other educational initiatives.

Career Advancement:

English proficiency is often taken as a valuable skill in the job market. Many multinational companies and organizations in this region require employees to have good English communication skills. Improving English proficiency enhances the employability of individuals, leading to better career prospects and economic development in this Mekong Delta.

Tourism and Hospitality Industry:

The Mekong Delta, with its unique cultural and natural attractions, is fast becoming a major tourist destination. English proficiency is now playing crucial role in the tourism and hospitality industry, as it allows locals to communicate effectively with international tourists, thereby promoting tourism and contributing a large portion to the local economy.

Goal:

The goal of AbES is to advance the English proficiency for future generations in Mekong Delta region (with specific focus on the Vietnam side) driven by the potential benefits it could bring to individuals, communities, and the region as a whole.

Objectives:

English proficiency has become a global necessity, serving as a lingua franca in various fields such as business, education, technology, and international diplomacy. Proficiency in English in Mekong region can open opportunities for individuals and communities, facilitating communication and collaboration on a global scale. The main objectives of this AbES program are zooming into these potentials:

- Bridging linguistic barriers and fostering educational empowerment within the communities of the Mekong Delta.

- Bolstering English proficiency in unlocking better opportunities for its inhabitants to excel locally and/or internationally.
- Nurturing individuals with confidence in seeing the next generation of leaders, innovators, and changemakers who will drive positive transformation with an excellent grasp in English language.

Partner Universities Selection:

When implementing the AbES program for Vietnamese students, several critical factors must be considered when selecting the abroad partner universities. These factors are listed in Table 3 with some descriptions.

Table 3: Partner University Selection

Selection Factor	Description / Strategy
Academic Reputation and Program Quality	Assess the academic standing of the partner universities, on their rankings, accreditation, and reviews. Past students can provide insights into the quality of education.
Curriculum Compatibility	Ensure the host university offers courses that align with the AbES's academic goals and objectives. That is, look for universities that provide recognized English language courses and relevant subjects.
Language Proficiency	Verify that the partner university has the resources to support non-native English speakers, including language support services and qualified instructors experienced in teaching English as a second language.
Cultural Environment and Adjustment	Understand the cultural aspects of the host country and university. A warm and inclusive environment can facilitate a smoother transition for students and enhance their overall experience.
Immigration, Transportation, and Support Services	Evaluate the availability of services such as orientation programs, academic advising, counseling, and student organizations to help international students adapt and succeed academically and socially.
Logistics and Accommodation	Consider the availability and quality of housing for international students. Safe, affordable, and convenient accommodations will significantly affect students' experiences.
Cost and Financial Aid	Analyze the tuition fees and living costs in comparison to available scholarships or financial aid. Transparency in costs will help students make updated decisions.
Location	Take into account the geographical location of the university and consider factors like safety, access to transportation, cultural experiences, and extracurricular opportunities.

Reputation for Hosting International Students	Research how well the partner university is known for accommodating international students. A strong reputation often signals a conducive and supportive environment.
Collaboration and Communication	Establish clear lines of communication with the partner institution. Effective collaboration is vital to facilitate program logistics, student support, and conflict resolution.
Health and Safety	Investigate the health services and safety measures in place at the university and possibly also within the surrounding area. This includes emergency protocols, healthcare accessibility, and general campus safety.
Feedback Mechanisms	Set up a system for gathering feedback from students who participate in the program to continuously improve the partnership and the overall experience. This is important for sustaining the collaboration with the partners.

By carefully considering these factors, the program organizers can select partner universities that provide an enriching and successful abroad experience for Vietnamese students, fostering their academic growth, cultural awareness, and global perspectives.

Sustainability Strategy:

To ensure the long-term success of the Abroad English Semester program for Vietnamese students, several critical factors have been identified and to be taken into consideration. These factors will support continuous improvement, student satisfaction, and institutional reputation. The key elements identified (per FPTU perspective) for sustainability of AbES are listed in Table 4.

Table 4 : AbES Sustainability Elements

Key Element	Description / Strategy
Strong Partnerships with Regular Communication	Maintain and nurture robust relationships with partner universities abroad. Regular communication, collaboration on curriculum development, and joint activities are essential to strengthen these partnerships.
Quality Assurance	Implement a system for continuous assessment and improvement of the program's quality. Regularly gather feedback from students and faculty to identify areas for enhancement.
Student Support Services	Provide comprehensive support services for students, including orientation, counseling, academic advising, and cultural

	integration programs. A strong support system can significantly impact student satisfaction and retention.
Adaptability and Flexibility	Be prepared to adapt the program in response to changing educational trends, student needs, and global circumstances (e.g., travel restrictions, changes in visa regulations). This flexibility can help sustain interest and participation.
Marketing and Recruitment	Develop effective marketing strategies to promote the program. Engaging storytelling, testimonials from alumni, and digital marketing can attract students and increase program visibility.
Cultural Exchange Opportunities	Foster opportunities for cultural engagement between Vietnamese students and local students at the host university. Activities such as cultural festivals, language exchange programs, and community service can enhance the overall experience.
Funding and Financial Management	Ensure a sustainable financial model for the program. This includes finding funding sources, managing costs, and providing financial aid or scholarships to support students.
Monitoring and Leveraging Industry Trends	Stay informed about trends in global education, particularly in English language learning and international studies. Incorporating trends into the program can keep it relevant and appealing.
Alumni Engagement	Build an alumni network to keep past participants connected and engaged. Alumni can provide valuable feedback, serve as mentors, and contribute to the program's reputation through their success stories.
Robust Regular Evaluation Mechanisms	Regularly assess program outcomes, including academic performance, student satisfaction, and post-program success. Data-driven insights can guide future improvements and demonstrate the program's impact.
Engagement with Parents and Guardians	Keep families informed and involved in the process. Regular communication about the program's benefits, outcomes, and student experiences can help alleviate concerns and encourage participation.
Policy and Advocacy Efforts	Stay informed about educational policies and advocate for supportive regulations that enhance international education opportunities.

These key elements are believed to enhance the Abroad English Semester program in achieving sustainable success, providing meaningful international educational experiences for Vietnamese students while strengthening institutional partnerships and reputation over time.

AbES Program Evaluation Metrics

A) Academic Achievement Metrics

Some key measurable and specific indicators and metrics related to academic achievement, focusing on students, faculty, university partners, and the Ministry of Education, for the AbES program are listed in Appendix A. These metrics are categorized based on students, faculty, university partners, and the Ministry of Education. By measuring and analyzing these key indicators, the AbES program can demonstrate its academic achievements, promote continuous improvement, and establish itself as a valuable contribution to the educational landscape of Vietnam.

B) Cultural Competence Metrics

Measuring cultural competence in the context of an AbES program involves assessing how well students adapt to and interact with diverse cultures, as well as evaluating the perceptions of employers and host families regarding students' cultural abilities. Some essential measurable and specific indicators and metrics are presented in Appendix B. It is believed that by implementing and assessing these metrics the AbES program can obtain valuable insights into the effectiveness of its initiatives in fostering intercultural understanding and adaptability among participants. This evaluation not only enhances the program's credibility but also supports continuous improvement efforts.

C) Employment in a Global Industry in Vietnam Metrics

Appendix C shows some measurable and specific indicators & metrics related to employment within a global industry in Vietnam from the alumni who participated in the AbES program. These metrics should be essential for the AbES program to effectively assess the impact of its curriculum on the employability and career trajectories of its alumni within global industries in Vietnam. This data may also be useful for program enhancements, align curricula with

industry needs, and provide insights to current and prospective students about the program's impact on career opportunities.

D) Sample Questions for AbES Program Evaluation

Appendix D provides various samples of questions that can be used to collect information and data for evaluating the implementation of the AbES program. This appendix may not be showing exhaustive question types but can serve as a guide to design questions for quantitative and qualitative assessment on the AbES program.

AbES Program Implementation

Under the “Empowering English Proficiency” project, FPTU Can Tho campus is to undertake the implementation of the pilot program coined as AbES (Abroad English Semester) program. This AbES is integrated into one of the processes in the flow of preparing the students to attain a deep specialized English Level at undergraduate level. The flow and the corresponding levels can be illustrated by the diagram in Figure 2.

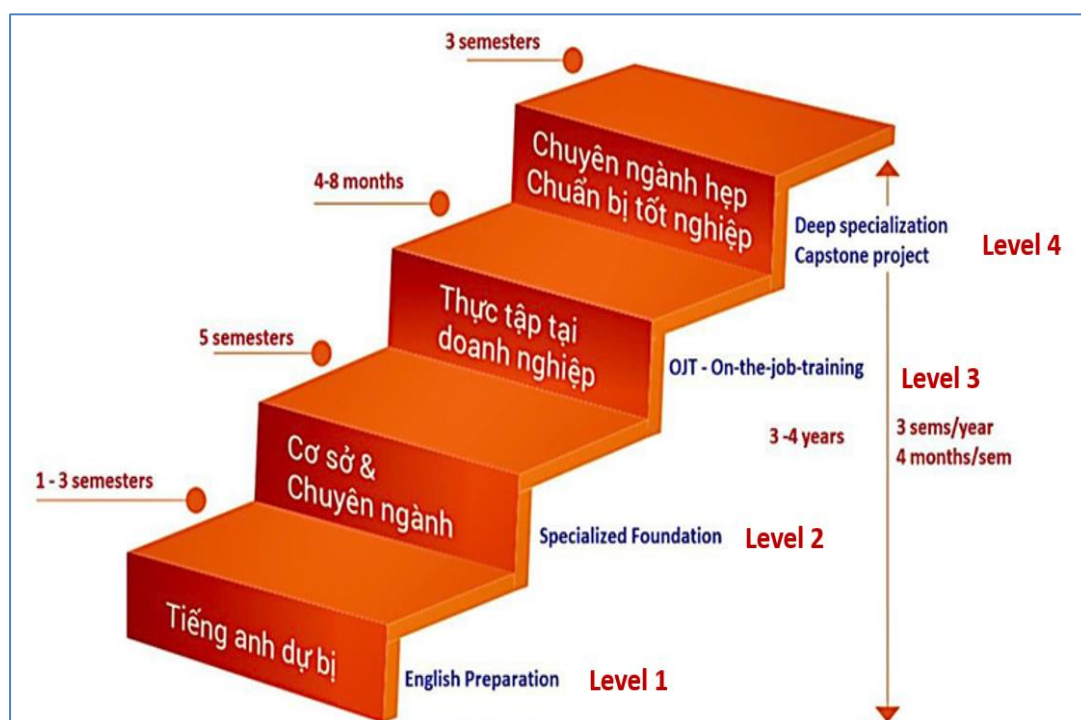


Figure 2: AbES Implementation in FPTU

Level 1 is the English Preparation level for a duration of 1 to 3 semesters. This level is to have all students to go through appropriate preparation in taking up English as his/her second language. This level may involve these approaches:

1. *Grammar Translation Method:*

This traditional approach emphasizes translating between the native language and English. Focuses on grammar rules, vocabulary, and written exercises. This is useful for building a strong foundation in grammar but may not promote fluency.

2. *Direct Method:*

Advocates teaching English directly without relying on translation. Emphasizes oral communication, vocabulary, and context. Encourages thinking in English rather than translating from the native language.

3. *Audio-Lingual Method:*

Based on repetition, drills, and pattern practice. Focuses on listening and speaking skills. This is useful for developing pronunciation and fluency.

Level 2 is the Specialized Foundation level for a 5-semester duration that focuses on core major subjects with these approaches:

1. *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):*

Shifts the focus to communication and real-life situations. Encourages interactive activities, role-playing, and authentic language use. Prioritizes fluency over accuracy.

2. *Content-Based Instruction:*

Integrates language learning with subject content (e.g., science, history). Students learn English while studying other subjects. Enhances language skills and content knowledge simultaneously.

Level 3 is the On-the-job Training which is where the AbES is integrated into. That is, at this level the implementation of AbES is the focal point. As such, this level is allocated with a long duration of minimum 4 months to a maximum of 8 months. The duration may varies pending on the English program offered by the overseas collaborating partners. The AbES program by FPTU Can Tho Campus is to showcase its role in fostering global competence through the interplay of language proficiency, soft skills, and cross-cultural engagement. This exploration highlights the program's significance within the broader landscape of international education. The AbES program in FPT University Can Tho Campus is an immersive educational endeavor designed to cultivate global competence among the students. Rooted in language proficiency, the program is to propels students to Summit 2 English proficiency, in facilitating effective international communication and comprehension. In complementing linguistic growth, the program integrates a robust suite of soft skills that encompass teamwork, intercultural adaptability, and effective communication. These skills resonate with the demands of today's interconnected world and resonate with the ethos of collaborative research. By uniting diverse student cohorts (both local and international), students in the AbES program shall inherently promote cross-cultural understanding and networking, enriching the educational journey. Introducing the AbES program in FPT University Can Tho Campus adds a valuable perspective to the global education dialogue. The program's focus on comprehensive development resonates with the commitment to nurturing Vietnam graduates to excel in the interconnected global society, aligning with the institution's broader educational objectives. Upon completing level 3, the know-how and the skills learned shall be extended into the next level.

Level 4 is the Deep Specialized Capstone Project level with a duration of 3 semesters. The students, upon returning to FPTU Can Tho campus after successfully completing the AbES program are expected to do a capstone project showcasing their level of English proficiency.

The capstone projects shall be relating to these domains:

1. *Language Pragmatics Study:*

Investigate how language is used in different contexts (e.g., formal vs. informal). Analyze speech acts, politeness strategies, and cultural nuances to present the findings in a research paper.

2. *Translation Project:*

Translate a short story, poem, or article from your native language into English. Present the challenges and choices you made during the translation process.

3. *Language Variation Study:*

Explore regional variations of English (e.g., British vs. American English). Conduct surveys, interviews, or analyze language samples to present the findings in a research report.

4. *English Language Teaching Materials:*

Develop teaching materials (lesson plans, worksheets, etc.) for teaching English to non-native speakers. Explain the rationale and demonstrate how these materials address language learning needs.

5. *Cross-Cultural Communication Project:*

Investigate cultural differences in communication styles. Compare English communication norms with those of your native language. Present the findings through a research paper or presentation.

6. *Creative Writing Portfolio:*

Compile a collection of short stories, poems, or personal essays written in English. Showcase the ability to use descriptive language, narrative techniques, and creativity.

7. *Literary Analysis:*

Choose a classic English novel, play, or poem. Analyze its themes, characters, and

literary devices. Write a comprehensive essay showcasing the critical thinking and language proficiency.

Successfully implementing the AbES program requires careful planning and adequate allocation of resources across several key areas. This includes program leadership, faculty/staff expertise, academic and administrative support, and infrastructure. A quick breakdown of what it will take in each area is described below.

1. Program Lead

Leadership Qualities: Strong leadership and vision to guide the program. Having enough experience in international education, program management, and understanding of global industry needs.

Responsibilities: Overseeing the development and execution of the curriculum. Collaborating with partner institutions abroad and with local stakeholders in Vietnam. Establishing relationships with employers and industry partners for internships and job placements.

Team Building: Recruiting a capable team to assist in various areas, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are well-defined.

2. Faculty/Staff

Qualified Instructors: Faculty with expertise in teaching English as a second language (ESL) and familiarity with global business practices. Experience in cultural competency, intercultural communication, and experiential learning pedagogy.

Support Staff: Academic advisors to guide students throughout the program. Administrative staff for logistics, student services, and communication.

Professional Development: Ongoing training and workshops for faculty on best practices in global education and intercultural effectiveness.

3. Expertise

Curriculum Development: Engaging experts in curriculum design to create a robust program that incorporates linguistic training, cultural immersion, and industry-relevant skills.

Industry Knowledge: Collaborating with professionals from global industries to ensure curriculum remains relevant to current market needs.

Cultural Advisors: Employing cultural experts to facilitate workshops and activities that enhance cultural understanding and adaptability.

4. Infrastructure

Physical Facilities: Classrooms equipped for language learning, including technology for remote access or virtual exchange when necessary. Spaces for group work and collaboration, fostering teamwork among students from diverse backgrounds.

Technological Resources: Learning management systems (LMS) for online coursework and resources. Access to digital tools and platforms to facilitate language learning, such as language apps, online collaboration tools, and resources for research and project work.

Support Services: Providing administrative support for student enrollment, housing, and logistics both locally and abroad. Establishing a robust student support system, including mentoring, counseling, and career services.

5. Funding and Budgeting

Financial Resources: Identifying and securing funding sources (e.g., tuition, grants, sponsorship) to support program operations and scholarships for students.

Cost Management: Creating a detailed budget that includes costs for faculty salaries, marketing, travel, partnerships, and infrastructure maintenance.

6. Partnerships and Collaboration

International Collaborations: Establishing partnerships with universities or organizations abroad to ensure quality and credibility of the program.

Local Industry Engagement: Building connections with local businesses and organizations for internship and job placement opportunities, as well as for guest lectures and networking events.

7. Marketing and Recruitment

Outreach Strategy: Developing a targeted recruitment strategy to attract potential students, including marketing materials that highlight program benefits and success stories from alumni.

Engagement Initiatives: Hosting informational sessions and webinars to inform prospective students about the Abroad English Semester and its potential impact on careers.

8. Evaluation and Feedback

Assessment Metrics: Implementing methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, using both qualitative and quantitative metrics (e.g., student feedback, employment outcomes, employer evaluations).

Continuous Improvement: Creating mechanisms for ongoing assessment and feedback loops to make informed adjustments to the program based on evaluations and changing industry needs.

By addressing these specific areas and ensuring sufficient resources are dedicated to each aspect, the AbES program can be successfully implemented, ultimately enhancing the academic and professional prospects of participating students. This comprehensive approach will also enable the program to adapt and grow in response to evolving global education trends.

Concluding Remarks:

"Empowering English Proficiency in the Mekong Delta Region" stands as a transformative program with the potential to shape a brighter future for individuals and communities across the Vietnam regions. By fostering English proficiency, this program not only opens doors to global opportunities in education, employment, and innovation but also strengthens cultural exchange and community development.

Professional development is another area of benefit for students going for abroad education. This benefit can come in three major forms: global networking opportunities, cultural competence and global awareness, and increased employability.

In the context of personal growth, according to Do (2020), those students with abroad studying experiences are deemed to gain advantages in independence and self-confidence, in cultural immersion and identity development, and in expanded perspectives and global citizenship.

This educational renovation addresses a context in which students aged between 16-18 years old who have studied English for approximately 900 hours at upper-secondary level often not

communicate in English effectively, and where teaching and learning are often exam oriented and focused on vocabulary, grammar, and translation rather than communication.

The ability to communicate effectively in English is an invaluable asset in our interconnected world, and as the Mekong Delta Region embraces this program, it paves the way for enhanced collaboration, understanding, and sustainable growth. As English proficiency becomes a cornerstone of progress, the Mekong Delta Region is poised to harness its full potential for a better future.

As an aspiring leader in International Affair Department my further ambitions in leading the AbES program shall include: aligning AbES outcomes with UNICEF education goals such as to improve socio-economic opportunities in reducing youth poverty; and focusing on FPTU contribution to showcase the AbES program's positive impact that extends beyond language learning.

Reference List

Anh, L. T. (2018). EFL students' voices on Learner Autonomy at a university in the Mekong Delta.

VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 34(2).

<https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4244>

Aziz A. A., & Kashinathan S. (2021). ESL Learners' Challenges in Speaking English in Malaysian Classroom. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 10(2), 983–991.

Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012). Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices. *ELT journal*, 12(7), 1-45

Council of Europe. Council for Cultural Co-operation. Education Committee. Modern Languages Division. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.

Dang Vu Hoai Nhan (2018). The Government's Policy on EFL Teacher Professional Development: Opportunities and Challenges For The Mekong Delta. *Can Tho University Journal of Science*, Vol 54, No. 8 pp 45-53.

Darmi, R., Saad, N. S., Abdullah, N., Puteh-Behak, F., Zakaria, Z., & Adnan, J. N. (2017). Teachers' Views on Students' Performance in English Language Proficiency Courses Via CEFR Descriptors. *IJAEDU- International E-Journal of Advances in Education*, 3(8), 363–370.

Doran, P. R. (2014). Professional development for teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse learners: teachers' experiences and perceptions. *Global Education Journal*, 3(3), 62-80.

Dudzik, D., and Nguyen, N. H., 2013. Vietnam's English teacher competencies framework: Policies, context, basis and design. Paper presented at the Teacher Competency Frameworks: Developing excellence in teaching, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Duyen, T., & Hoang, T. (2020). Key stakeholders' perspectives on English language requirements at work: concerns and solutions. *ResearchGate* 5B. 85-93
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344264074>

English Language Teaching and Learning in Vietnam (2017).

Education First (2017) <https://www.ef-australia.com.au/epi/regions/asia/vietnam/>

Fahmy, J. J., & Bilton, L. (1992). The Sociocultural Dimension of TEFL Education: The Omani File. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development*, 13(3), 269-289.

Khoiroini, M. Y., Pataningtias, E., Aryatama, D. K., Bachtiar, M. H., Nafia, Z. I., & Oktirisyani, F. (2020). ELT Trends in Asia: Current Trends and Issues of English Language Teaching Practice.

M. T. Ngo and L. T. Tran (2024). Current English Education in Vietnam: Policy, Practices, and Challenges. *Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community*. ISSN 2731-7552. pp 49-69

Nhan, D.V.H. (2018). The government's policy on EFL teacher professional development: Opportunities and challenges for the Mekong Delta. *Can Tho University Journal of Science* 54(8), 45-53. <https://doi.org/10.22144/ctu.jen.2018.037>

Nguyen, T.T.H., & Pham, T.T.M. (2016). Difficulties in teaching English for specific purposes: Empirical study at Vietnam universities. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(2). <http://www.ccsenet.org/hes>

Noor Azam and Salbrina S. (2015). ASEAN Integration and the Role of English Language Teaching. http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/ASEAN_Integ_ELt

Nutch Oeamoum; Chuanpit Sriwichai (2020). Problems and Needs in English Language Teaching from the Viewpoints of Pre-service English Teachers in Thailand. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 6(4): 592-601.

Richmond S. and Kelly K. (2015). ASEAN Integration and the Role of English Language Teaching.
http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/ASEAN_Integ_ELt

Vietnam English Language Training – Policy Update. (2018). Australian Government,
<https://www.ef-australia.com.au/epi/regions/asia/>

Vo Thien An, T., Dang Ngoc Diep, N., & Duc Trung, N. (2023). Factors Influencing Vietnamese Students' Choices to Attain English Proficiency Standards In A University In Vietnam. *European, Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8(5).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejel.v8i5.5013>

Appendix A: Metrics for Academic Achievement

Category	Evaluation	Metric / Indicator	Description	Data Collected
Student	Academic Performance	GPA/CGPA	Average GPA of students in the AbES program compared to the overall average GPA of the partner university's student population.	
		Course Completion Rate	Percentage of students successfully completing all required courses within the program.	
		Academic Awards & Recognition	Number of students receiving academic awards, scholarships, or recognitions at the partner university.	
	English Language Proficiency	Pre- and Post-Program Assessments	Measure the improvement in students' English language proficiency through standardized tests like TOEFL, IELTS, or university-administered assessments.	
		Qualitative Feedback	Collect student feedback on the effectiveness of language support resources and how the program impacted their English language skills	
	Overall Satisfaction	Student Surveys	Regularly conduct surveys to gauge student satisfaction with the program, including aspects like curriculum, faculty, support services, and overall experience.	
		Focus Groups	Conduct focus groups with students to gather more detailed feedback on their experiences and identify areas for improvement.	
Faculty	Faculty Engagement	Number of Collaborative Projects	Track the number of collaborative research projects, teaching initiatives, or curriculum	

			development efforts between Vietnamese faculty and faculty at partner universities.	
		Faculty Exchange Programs	Encourage faculty exchange programs to foster knowledge sharing and enhance teaching practices.	
	Curriculum Development	Alignment with National Standards	Ensure the curriculum aligns with Vietnamese national education standards and the learning objectives of the program.	
		Integration of Global Perspectives	Assess the extent to which the curriculum incorporates global perspectives and encourages intercultural understanding.	
University Partner	Program Participation	Student Enrollment	Monitor the number of Vietnamese students enrolling in the program each year.	
		Retention Rate	Track the percentage of students who successfully complete the program and return to Vietnam	
	Collaboration & Partnership	Joint Research Initiatives	Encourage joint projects involving Vietnamese and partner university faculty.	
		Faculty and Staff Exchange	Track the number of faculty and staff exchanges between partner universities.	
Ministry of Education	Policy Alignment	National Education Goals	Assess how the Abroad English Semester program aligns with the Ministry of Education's national education goals and priorities.	
		Internationalization Strategy	Evaluate the program's contribution to the Ministry's internationalization strategy for Vietnamese higher education.	
	Program Impact	Job Placement Rates	Track the post-program employment rates of participants, highlighting their career	

			achievements and competitiveness in the global job market	
		National Development Goals	Analyze the program's contribution to achieving broader national development goals, such as fostering global citizens, promoting innovation, and strengthening international relations.	

Appendix B: Metrics for Cultural Competence

Category	Evaluation	Metric / Indicator	Description	Data Collected
Students	Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity	Self-Assessment Surveys	Pre- and post-program surveys to evaluate students' perceptions of their cultural awareness and sensitivity before and after the experience abroad.	
		Reflection Papers	Assess students' reflection essays on cultural experiences, challenges faced, and learning outcomes related to cultural competence.	
	Cross-Cultural Interactions	Participation in Cultural Activities	Track the number of cultural events, social activities, and workshops attended by students during the semester.	
		Peer Feedback	Gather feedback from peers regarding students' participation in discussions and activities that involve cultural exchange.	
	Language and Communication Skills	Language Proficiency Tests	Measure improvements in language skills that enhance effective communication in cross-cultural contexts, using tools like TOEFL or custom assessments.	
		Communication Skills Assessment:	Conduct assessments that gauge students' ability to navigate conversations and interactions in diverse cultural settings	
Employers	Workplace Readiness	Internship Evaluation Metrics	Collect feedback from employers on students' performance during internships, focusing on their ability to adapt to the workplace culture and communicate effectively with diverse teams.	

		Cultural Competency Assessment	Develop specific criteria to evaluate cultural competency in the workplace, such as understanding diverse clientele, inclusivity, and teamwork within a multicultural environment.	
	Post-Employment Surveys	Employer Feedback Surveys	Gather feedback from employers on how well graduates (from the program) demonstrate cultural awareness and adaptability in their roles.	
		Job Placement Rates in Multicultural Work Environments	Monitor the employment rates of program graduates in companies that prioritize diversity and international collaboration.	
Host Families	Cultural Exchange Experience	Host Family Surveys	Collect feedback from host families on the students' engagement with them and participation in cultural exchange activities, focusing on openness and adaptability.	
		Assessment of Interaction Quality	Measure the frequency and quality of interactions between students and host families through surveys, focusing on mutual learning experiences.	
	Cultural Adaptation	Host Family Reports	Track reports from host families regarding how well students adapted to their cultural norms, communication styles, and family values.	
		Feedback on Student Perspective	Host families provide insights into students' interest in learning about their culture, understanding local customs, and willingness to share their own background.	
		Adaptability Ratings	Host families could provide feedback on how well students adapted to family routines and cultural practices, rated on a predefined scale	

		Cultural Learning Outcomes	Host families assess the extent to which students demonstrated growth in cultural understanding, based on interactions and discussions held during their stay.	
Additional Metrics	Diversity and Inclusion Indicators	Diversity Training Participation	Track the number of students participating in any offered diversity or cultural competence workshops before or during the program.	
		Cultural Competence Training Assessment	Evaluate the effectiveness of any training programs offered to students, using pre- and post-training assessments	
	Long-Term Impact Measures	Post-Program Surveys	Longer-term surveys distributed to students, employers, and host families asking about any lasting impacts on cultural competence and ongoing relationships or communication after the program	
		Social Change Engagement	Engagement in community service or activities promoting social change related to cultural issues post-program, as a measure of ongoing commitment to cultural competence.	
		Quantitative and Qualitative Data	Use both quantitative (e.g., survey results) and qualitative (e.g., interviews and open-ended responses) data to provide a comprehensive picture of cultural competence development.	

Appendix C: Metrics for Employment in Global Industry in Vietnam

Evaluation	Metric / Indicator	Description	Data Collected
Employment Rate	Overall Employment Rate	Percentage of program alumni who are employed within a year of graduation.	
	Global Industry Employment Rate	Percentage of program alumni employed within a global industry (e.g., technology, manufacturing, tourism, hospitality) within a year of graduation.	
	Target Industry Employment Rate	Percentage of alumni employed in a specific global industry that aligns with the program's focus (e.g., if the program emphasizes English for Business, track employment in sectors like finance or international trade).	
Job Placement Quality	Average Salary	Average starting salary of alumni employed in global industries.	
	Job Title	Analyze the job titles held by alumni, identifying those indicative of global industry roles (e.g., international project manager, global marketing specialist).	
	Industry Sector Representation	Track the distribution of alumni placements across different global industry sectors (e.g., technology, finance, tourism).	
Career Advancement	Job Progression	Assess the career progression of alumni after a set period (e.g., 2, 3, 5 years).	
	Promotion Rate	Track the percentage of alumni who have received promotions or salary increases within their global industry roles.	
	Leadership Positions	Monitor the percentage of alumni who have taken on leadership roles in global companies or projects	
Global Industry Skills Development	English Language Proficiency	Analyze improvements in English language proficiency, particularly in areas relevant to global industry communication (e.g., business English, technical English).	

	Cultural Adaptability	Measure alumni's perceived confidence and competence in working across cultures through self-assessment surveys.	
	International Networking	Assess the number of alumni who have established professional connections with individuals or organizations in global industries.	
Program-Specific Outcomes	Employer Satisfaction	Gather feedback from employers of program alumni on their performance in global industry roles, focusing on their language skills, cultural competence, and adaptability	
	Internship Success Rate	Track the percentage of alumni who secured internships within global companies during their program.	
	Alumni Testimonials	Collect testimonials from program alumni who have secured jobs in global industries, highlighting the program's impact on their career success.	
Industry Collaboration	Partnership with Global Companies	Develop partnerships with companies operating in global industries in Vietnam to provide internship opportunities and career advice to program alumni.	
	Industry Mentorship Programs	Establish mentoring programs connecting program alumni with professionals in global industries to guide them in their career journeys.	

Note: Data Collection Methods

- 1) **Alumni Surveys:** Conduct regular surveys to gather data on employment status, salary, job titles, and career advancement.
- 2) **Employer Feedback:** Collect feedback from employers on the performance of program alumni in global industry roles.
- 3) **Tracking Job Placement Data:** Maintain a database of alumni employment placements, including industry sector, job title, and salary information.

Appendix D: Sample Questions for Evaluating AbES Program Implementation

A) Essential knowledge for the program designer of AbES (applicable to the IA office personnel):

Key Area	Focus	Sample Question
Understanding the Program Goals	Academic Focus Goal	What specific English language skills or knowledge do you aim to impart? Is it general English, business English, academic English, or a specific field like literature or linguistics?
	Cultural Immersion Goal	How will the program foster cultural understanding and exchange? What activities or experiences will you include to facilitate this?
	Career Development Goal	How will the program prepare students for future academic or professional pursuits? Are there internships or networking opportunities?
Target Audience	Student Profile	Who are the ideal candidates for the program? What are their English language proficiency levels, academic backgrounds, and career goals?
	Cultural Fit	How to consider the cultural preferences and expectations of potential students, especially if they come from diverse backgrounds?
Program Structure	Curriculum	Has a comprehensive curriculum been designed to align with the program's goals and meets the needs of the target audience?
	Coursework	What are the needs to determine the types of courses to offer (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, conversation, writing, etc.) and the teaching methods (e.g., lectures, group work, individual assignments)?
	Activities and Excursions	What to plan for cultural activities, excursions, and field trips to enhance the learning experience and provide opportunities for cultural exchange?
Logistics and Operations	Partner Institutions	How to establish partnerships with foreign universities or language schools that can provide suitable academic facilities and accommodation?

	Visa and Immigration	What are the needs to coordinate the visa and immigration requirements for students from different countries?
	Accommodation	Arranging of suitable accommodation options for students, such as on-campus housing, off-campus apartments, or homestays?
	Health and Safety	Where to get the proper policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of students while abroad, including emergency plans and insurance coverage?
Marketing and Recruitment	Target Markets	Must know how to identify potential markets for the program, such as universities, high schools, and language schools?
	Marketing Materials	Able to create promotional materials, such as brochures, websites, and social media content, to attract potential students?
	Recruitment Strategies	How to develop effective recruitment strategies, including online marketing, attending education fairs, and collaborating with agents?
Evaluation and Improvement	Assessment Tools	How to implement a system for assessing student progress and satisfaction with the program?
	Feedback Mechanisms	The needs to gather feedback from students, faculty, staff, and partner universities to identify areas for improvement?
	Continuous Improvement	How to use the feedback to make necessary adjustments and enhance the quality of future programs?
Additional Considerations	Budget	What are the necessary to develop a realistic budget for the program, including tuition fees, accommodation costs, and other expenses?
	Sustainability	How to analyse feedback data to consider the long-term sustainability of the program and explore ways to generate revenue and reduce costs?
	Cultural Sensitivity	How to know to ensure that the program is culturally sensitive and respectful of local and foreign customs and traditions?

B) To gather information/data about the contributions from partner universities:

Key Area	Focus	Sample Question
Academic Expertise	Curriculum Development	How the partner universities can contribute to the design and implementation of the academic curriculum, ensuring it aligns with their standards and meets the needs of participants?
	Faculty and Instructors	How they provide qualified faculty members to teach English language courses and potentially offer additional academic subjects related to the host country's culture or history?
Infrastructure and Facilities	Classrooms and Learning Spaces	Up to what extend the partners can offer suitable classrooms, language labs, and other learning facilities for the program?
	On-Campus Resources	Can they provide access to libraries, computer labs, and other academic resources that can benefit participants?
Cultural Immersion Opportunities	Local Connections	How to know the partners' ability to facilitate cultural exchanges, field trips, and community engagement activities, allowing participants to immerse themselves in the local culture?
	Homestay Arrangements	Can they assist in arranging homestays with local families, providing participants with authentic cultural experiences?
Administrative Support	Student Services	How effective the partners can offer administrative support, such as student advising, visa assistance, and housing arrangements?
	On-Site Coordination	What can they provide for the on-site staff to assist with program logistics and support participants?
Networking and Alumni Relations	Professional Connections	How partners can connect participants with local professionals, alumni, and businesses, fostering networking opportunities?
	Alumni Network	Can they help build and maintain an alumni network, providing ongoing support and resources to former participants?
Financial Contributions	Scholarships and Grants	Any opportunities partners may offer scholarships or grants to help reduce the cost of participation for students?
	Fundraising Initiatives	They have the mechanism to support fundraising efforts to generate additional funding for the program?

C) To gather information/data for improvement per the designer/implementor/partners perspectives:

Key Area	Sample Question
Program Design and Objectives	<p>Did the program align with the stated objectives and meet the needs of the target audience?</p> <p>Were the curriculum, activities, and assessments appropriate for the participants' language levels and interests?</p> <p>Were there any areas where the program could have been more engaging or challenging?</p>
Curriculum and Instruction	<p>Were the English language courses effective in improving participants' language skills?</p> <p>Were the cultural immersion activities meaningful and relevant to the participants' learning experiences?</p> <p>Did the academic courses provide valuable insights into the host country's culture, history, or society?</p> <p>Were the instructors qualified, knowledgeable, and supportive?</p>
Host University and Accommodation	<p>Was the partner university a good choice for the program?</p> <p>Were the accommodation options suitable and comfortable for participants?</p> <p>Were there any issues with safety or security during the program?</p>
Student Experience	<p>Were the participants satisfied with the overall program experience?</p> <p>Were there any challenges or difficulties faced by participants?</p> <p>How did the program contribute to participants' personal and academic growth?</p> <p>Did participants feel adequately supported by the program staff?</p> <p>What were the most enjoyable and least enjoyable aspects of the program?</p>
Partner Collaboration	<p>Were the partners effective in contributing to the program's success?</p> <p>Were there any areas where collaboration could have been improved?</p> <p>How could the partnership be strengthened for future programs?</p> <p>Were there any challenges or areas of disagreement between the program and its partners?</p>
Program Management and Logistics	<p>Were the program logistics well-planned and executed?</p> <p>Were there any issues with transportation, excursions, or other logistical arrangements?</p> <p>Was the on-site staff effective in supporting participants and addressing their needs?</p>
Evaluation and Feedback	<p>Were the evaluation methods effective in gathering feedback from participants and can the feedback results used to make improvements for future programs?</p> <p>Were there any areas where the evaluation process could have been enhanced?</p> <p>What evaluation tools were used to gather feedback from participants, such as surveys, interviews, or focus groups?</p>

D) Who is best positioned to ask each of those questions and in what format

The appropriate format for asking each evaluation question depends on the specific goals of the evaluation, the desired depth of information, and the resources available. Some suggestions are:

Type/Format	For	Sample Question
Survey	Gathering quantitative data. Questions for closed-ended responses (e.g., Likert scales, multiple-choice) or short, open-ended answers.	Overall, how satisfied were you with the AbES program? How effective were the English language instruction in improving your language skills? Were the cultural immersion activities enjoyable and informative?
Focus Group	Exploring participants' perspectives, ideas, and experiences in a group setting. Questions that require more in-depth discussion and exploration of participants' thoughts and feelings.	What were the most memorable aspects of your cultural immersion experiences? How did the program help you to develop your intercultural communication skills? What suggestions do you have for improving the program for future participants?
Interview	Conducting in-depth, one-on-one conversations with participants to gather detailed information. Questions that require detailed responses and exploration of personal experiences and perspectives.	Can you describe a specific instance where you felt that the program helped you to grow personally or academically? What challenges did you face during the program, and how were they addressed? How did the AbES program compare to your expectations?

Additional considerations	Combination of methods	Using a combination of survey, focus group, and interview can provide a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences.
	Language	Ensure that the evaluation materials are in a language that participants can understand.
	Incentives	Consider offering incentives to participants to encourage their participation.
	Confidentiality	Assure participants that their responses will be kept confidential.

Who should ask the questions?	Program staff	Directly involved in the program and can provide context and follow-up questions.
	External evaluators	Those can offer an objective perspective and can ensure confidentiality.

E) Sample questions can be asked to collect data for quantitative analysis:

Aspect	Sample Questions
Program Satisfaction	<p>On a scale of 1-5 (1 being very dissatisfied, 5 being very satisfied), how satisfied were you with the overall program experience?</p> <p>How likely are you to recommend this program to others?</p> <p>How satisfied were you with the quality of the English language instruction?</p> <p>How satisfied were you with the cultural immersion activities?</p> <p>How satisfied were you with the cost of the program?</p>
Learning Outcomes	<p>Did the program meet your expectations in terms of improving your English language skills?</p> <p>Did the program help you to develop a better understanding of the host country's culture?</p> <p>Did the program enhance your intercultural communication skills?</p> <p>Before the program, what was your English language proficiency level?</p> <p>After the program, what do you believe your English language proficiency level is?</p>
Program Logistics	<p>How satisfied were you with the quality of the accommodation?</p> <p>How satisfied were you with the transportation arrangements?</p> <p>How satisfied were you with the support provided by the on-site staff?</p> <p>Were the program materials and resources adequate?</p>
Demographic Information	<p>What is your age?</p> <p>What is your gender?</p> <p>What is your native language and your highest level of education?</p> <p>What was your primary reason for participating in the program?</p>
Follow-up Questions	<p>Have you maintained any connections with people you met during the program?</p> <p>Has the program had a positive impact on your career or future?</p> <p>Did the cultural immersion activities help you understand and appreciate the host culture?</p> <p>Do you believe the program has increased your opportunities for study or employment?</p>

F) Sample questions can be asked to collect data for qualitative analysis:

Aspect	Sample Questions
Program Experience	What was the most memorable experience you had during the program? Can you describe a specific instance where you felt immersed in the host culture? What were the biggest challenges you faced during the program? How did you overcome these challenges? How did the program help you to step outside of your comfort zone?
Learning and Growth	What did you learn about yourself during the program? How has the program changed your perspective on other cultures? In what ways has the program helped you to grow as a person? Can you share a specific example of how the program helped you improve your English language skills? How has the program changed your perspective on the world?
Cultural Immersion	What were the most valuable cultural experiences you had? How did your interactions with local people contribute to your understanding of the host culture? Did you feel comfortable and welcome in the local community? Did you encounter any cultural misunderstandings or challenges? How did you resolve them?
Program Impact	How has participating in the program impacted your plans? Do you believe the program has increased your opportunities for study or employment? What advice would you give to future participants? How has your English language proficiency improved since participating in the program?
Suggestions for Improvement	What could have been done better to improve the program? What additional activities or resources would you have liked to see included? What changes would you suggest enhancing the cultural immersion experience? What advice would you give to future participants of the program?

***G) Sample of Evaluation Questions to assess AbES's Goal of preparing Vietnamese students
for international work:***

Aspect	To Consider	Sample Questions
Career Readiness	<p>How confident do participants feel in their ability to communicate effectively in English in a professional setting?</p> <p>Do participants feel prepared to adapt to different cultural norms and expectations in the workplace?</p> <p>Do participants have a better understanding of international business practices and etiquette?</p>	<p>How well did the program prepare you for the challenges of working in an international environment?</p> <p>Did the program equip you with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in a global workplace?</p> <p>How confident do you feel in your ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures?</p> <p>Did the program help you develop a global mindset and understanding of different business practices?</p> <p>Have you (participants) gained better understanding of international business practices and etiquette?</p> <p>Do you feel you have a strong understanding of international business etiquette and practices?</p>
Intercultural Competence	<p>How comfortable are participants with interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds?</p> <p>Can participants effectively navigate cross-cultural communication challenges?</p> <p>Do participants demonstrate a greater appreciation for diversity and inclusivity?</p>	<p>How effective were the cultural immersion activities in preparing you for intercultural interactions?</p> <p>Did the program help you develop empathy and respect for different cultures?</p> <p>How confident do you feel in your ability to adapt to new cultural contexts?</p> <p>Did the program help you understand the importance of cultural sensitivity and etiquette?</p>
Global Mindset	<p>Do participants have a broader understanding of global issues and trends?</p> <p>Can participants analyse and evaluate information from multiple perspectives?</p> <p>Are participants more aware of the interconnectedness of the global economy?</p>	<p>How satisfied were you with the program's overall preparation for international work?</p> <p>Were there any specific areas where you felt the program could have been improved?</p> <p>What advice would you give to future participants to maximize their preparation for international careers?</p>

Networking and Relationships	<p>Did participants have opportunities to build professional relationships with people from different countries?</p> <p>Can participants effectively network and create professional connections?</p> <p>Do participants feel confident in their ability to adapt to new work environments and cultures?</p>	<p>Has participating in the program increased your interest in pursuing a career abroad?</p> <p>Do you feel more confident in your ability to secure international job opportunities?</p> <p>Has the program helped you build a professional network that can support your global career aspirations?</p> <p>How has the program impacted your career trajectory?</p>
Post-Program Outcomes	<p>How many participants have secured international internships or jobs after completing the program?</p> <p>What are the participants' career aspirations after completing the program?</p> <p>How has the program contributed to participants' career development and advancement?</p>	<p>Did the program help you develop strong communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills?</p> <p>Did the program provide opportunities to practice these skills in real-world scenarios?</p> <p>How well prepared do you feel for job interviews and networking events?</p> <p>Did the program help you understand the expectations of international employers?</p>

H) Sample questions to assess participants' career paths and interests:

Aspect	Sample Questions
Career Goals	<p>What are your long-term career goals?</p> <p>What industries or fields are you interested in pursuing?</p> <p>What specific roles or positions are you aiming for?</p>
Career Aspirations	<p>What motivates you to pursue a career in this field?</p> <p>What do you find most exciting or rewarding about your chosen career path?</p> <p>What are your career aspirations beyond your immediate goals?</p> <p>What skills or knowledge do you believe you need to achieve your career objectives?</p>
Career Preparation	<p>How do you believe the AbES program has prepared you for your chosen career path?</p> <p>What specific skills or knowledge have you gained that will be valuable in your future career?</p> <p>How has the program helped you to develop a professional network? Have you developed a career plan or roadmap?</p>

Career Challenges	<p>What are the biggest challenges you anticipate facing in your career?</p> <p>How do you plan to overcome these challenges?</p> <p>What support or resources do you need to achieve your career goals?</p> <p>Are there any specific skills or knowledge that you feel you need to develop further?</p>
Career Satisfaction	<p>How satisfied are you with your current career path or chosen field?</p> <p>What factors contribute to your career satisfaction?</p> <p>Are there any aspects of your career that you would like to change or improve?</p> <p>How has the program helped you to develop a global mindset and perspective?</p>

– END OF THESIS –