TRENDS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES OF BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN VIETNAM IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

XU HƯỚNG, CHÍNH SÁCH VÀ THỰC TIỄN GIÁO DỤC SONG NGỮ, ĐA NGÔN NGỮ Ở VIỆT NAM TRONG BỐI CẢNH TOÀN CẦU HÓA

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(Received: October 15, 2025; Revised: March 23, 2026; Accepted: September 19, 2026)

DOI: 10.31130/ud-jst.2026.24(10).550E

Abstract - In the context of increasing globalization, bilingual and multilingual education is a crucial strategy for developing a workforce capable of adapting to multicultural environments. This article analyzes language education trends in Vietnam, focusing on policies, existing models, and practical implementation. Based on key documents such as the 2019 Education Law, the 2018 General Education Program, and the national strategy for ethnic minority education, the study highlights Vietnam's commitment to enhancing foreign language proficiency while preserving indigenous languages. Prominent models include the Cambridge International Program, VNEN combined with U.S. curricula, the International Baccalaureate (IB), and ethnic language programs (as of 2024). Through the analysis of documents from 2010 to 2024, the article identifies both the benefits and challenges of bilingual education and offers recommendations to improve bilingual and multilingual education policy effectiveness, contributing to the development of high-quality human resources in the digital era.

Key words - Bilingual and multilingual education; policies and practices; sustainability

Tóm tắt - Trong bối cảnh toàn cầu hóa ngày càng gia tăng, giáo dục song ngữ và đa ngữ là chiến lược quan trọng nhằm phát triển nguồn nhân lực thích ứng với môi trường đa văn hóa. Bài viết phân tích xu hướng giáo dục ngôn ngữ tại Việt Nam, tập trung vào chính sách, mô hình hiện có và thực tiễn triển khai. Dựa trên các văn bản như Luật Giáo dục 2019, Chương trình Giáo dục phổ thông 2018 và chiến lược giáo dục dân tộc, nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh xu hướng của Việt Nam trong việc nâng cao năng lực ngoại ngữ và bảo tồn ngôn ngữ dân tộc. Các mô hình tiêu biểu gồm: Chương trình Quốc tế Cambridge, VNEN kết hợp chương trình Mỹ, Tú tài Quốc tế (IB), và chương trình ngôn ngữ dân tộc. Qua phân tích tài liệu từ 2010–2024, bài viết chỉ ra lợi ích và thách thức của giáo dục song ngữ, đồng thời đưa ra khuyến nghị nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả chính sách giáo dục song ngữ và đa ngữ quốc gia, góp phần phát triển nguồn nhân lực chất lượng cao trong thời đại số.

Từ khóa - Giáo dục song ngữ và đa ngữ; chính sách và thực tiễn; bền vững

1. Introduction

In the context of rapid globalization and deepening international integration, the expansion of bilingual and multilingual education programs has become an undeniable trend in Vietnam's general education sector. These developments not only meet the demands of an increasingly diverse labor market but also aim to foster school-age learners' communication skills, critical thinking, and creativity within school settings. Governments and educational institutions are increasingly integrating multiple languages into education systems, creating both opportunities and challenges for language teaching.

Globalization drives the development of bilingual and multilingual education, a key strategy for enhancing the quality of the workforce [1]. Thus, language education is not only a communication tool but also a key factor for global economic, cultural, and scientific integration [1]. Many countries have recognized the importance of equipping citizens with diverse language skills to adapt to the rapidly changing world and maintain a competitive edge in the international market [2].

In Vietnam, the process of international integration is taking place vigorously, creating an urgent need to promote bilingual and multilingual education at all levels, from primary to university. The Vietnamese government has been issuing various policies to encourage and develop diverse language education programs, with the aim of enhancing foreign language proficiency among school-age learners and meeting the demand for high-quality human resources in the context of globalization. These policies are reflected in key documents such as the 2019 Education Law [3] and the 2018 General Education Program [4], which explicitly emphasize foreign language competence as a core component of school-age learners_development [5]. Furthermore, recent empirical and pedagogical studies published in the Journal of Science and Technology - The University of Danang (JST-UD) highlight that innovative English language teaching and communicative competence development serve as vital anchors for institutional integration and regional labor adaptability in Central Vietnam [6], [7].

However, despite significant efforts, there is a lack of studies that systematically connect policy frameworks with actual implementation practices in the Vietnamese context. The limited number of comprehensive studies may affect evidence-based policy decisions and the effective development of training programs [8]. As emphasized by recent contributions in JST-UD, contextualized policy evaluation and grassroots pedagogical adaptations are essential for bridging national

directives with classroom execution [9]. Therefore, this study aims to analyze language trends in bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam's general education system based on policy documents and practical program data. It is hoped to provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the current state of bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam, thereby contributing to the proposal of solutions to enhance the quality and effectiveness of this field in the future.

Based on the identified policy gaps and educational practices, this article addresses the following research questions:

1. How do national education policies influence the development of bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam?

2. What models of bilingual and multilingual education are currently implemented, and what outcomes do they yield?

3. What challenges and opportunities exist in integrating bilingual and multilingual education into Vietnam's education system?

2. Literature Review

Bilingual education is commonly defined as the use of two or more languages in teaching and learning activities within a school environment [1]. According to Baker and Wright [11], several common models of bilingual education have been identified, including maintenance bilingual education, transitional bilingual education, immersion education, and dual-language immersion programs as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Common Models of Bilingual Education*

Common Models of Bilingual Education by Baker and Wright [11]	
Models	Characteristics
Maintenance/ Developmental Bilingual Education	Emphasizes the simultaneous development of both the mother tongue and the second language, aiming to achieve complete bilingualism and biculturalism. This model is often applied to preserve the language and culture of minority communities.
Transitional Bilingual Education	Uses the mother tongue as a bridge to help students acquire the second language, with the ultimate goal of fully transitioning to the second language.
Immersion Education	Students are "immersed" completely in the second language, with all subjects taught in that language.
Two-way Immersion/Dual Language Immersion	A group of students who speak the majority language and students who speak the minority language study together in both languages to develop complete bilingualism and biculturalism for both groups.

In addition, Baker and Wright [11] also emphasize the role of social, political, and cultural factors in the formation and implementation of bilingual education policies.

Currently, bilingual education is widely regarded as an important strategy for developing a highly adaptable workforce, ready to work in multicultural environments and flexibly use multiple languages [5], [11]. Bilingual proficiency not only helps learners expand their opportunities for international education but also creates a distinct advantage in the global labor market, where communication and intercultural skills are increasingly regarded as the "core competencies" of global citizens. A growing body of research shows that bilingualism can enhance social integration and career opportunities, provided that educational systems and societies offer supportive policies and learning environments [12]. Meanwhile, Gándara [8] points out that bilingual education programs have a direct impact on academic abilities and future career orientation, which is particularly important for school-age learners from minority language communities. Additionally, Callahan and Gándara [10, p.145] emphasize the "bilingual advantage," arguing that bilingual education not only supports language mastery but also contributes to the development of a global mindset, intercultural competence, and greater cognitive flexibility - attributes that are increasingly valued in contemporary knowledge-based and digital economies.

Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) can be considered as a more advanced model of bilingual education, not only focusing on language proficiency development but also emphasizing the understanding and respect for cultural diversity [12]. Abello-Contesse [12] argues that IBE promotes dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect between different cultures through the curriculum and educational activities. According to Abello-Contesse [12], the main characteristics of IBE can be summarized as follows:

• Integration of language and culture: Language should not be considered separately from its cultural context [9].

• Developing multicultural identity: IBE encourages school-age learners to develop a strong identity in their mother tongue/native culture while being open and flexible with other languages and cultures [12].

• Promoting dialogue and inclusion: This model facilitates interaction between different language and cultural groups [12].

• Diverse curriculum: The content and teaching methods are designed to reflect the diversity of cultures [12].

Experimental research on bilingual and multilingual education has been conducted extensively, showing both various benefits and challenges. Specifically, a research review by Sánchez-Pérez and Manzano-Agugliaro [13] indicates that bilingual programs can offer numerous benefits, not only in language proficiency but also in cognitive, academic, and social aspects. School-age learners are often noted to have better metacognitive abilities due to their ability to switch between languages, which helps develop flexibility in thinking and problem-solving. Additionally, the study has shown that the academic performance of bilingual school-age learners can be higher in certain subjects [13]. From a social perspective, exposure to multiple languages and cultures helps school-age learners develop better social adaptability, enhances empathy, and improves intercultural communication skills [13]. However, Sánchez-Pérez and

Manzano-Agugliaro [13] also note that the effectiveness of bilingual education is not absolute but depends on many important factors. These factors include the quality of the curriculum, the competence of the teaching staff, support from families and the community, as well as the state's language policy. This emphasizes the importance of building a comprehensive support ecosystem to maximize the benefits of bilingual education.

In Southeast Asia, countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore have adopted different policies and models for bilingual and multilingual education, reflecting diverse sociolinguistic conditions and national priorities. In the Philippines, a mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) policy was introduced in the early 2010s as part of the K to 12 Basic Education reform, with the dual aim of improving educational quality and supporting the maintenance of indigenous languages. Initial empirical studies, such as those by Dekker and Young, report positive effects of MTB-MLE on early literacy and students' academic performance in specific implementation contexts [14].

In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia serves as the main medium of instruction in national schools, while English is taught as a compulsory subject and languages such as Mandarin and Tamil are offered in certain school streams, reflecting the country's multiethnic and multilingual composition. Singapore is frequently cited as a high-performing bilingual education system, with English as the working language and an officially designated mother tongue (e.g., Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil) for each major ethnic group. According to Dixon et al., the relative success of Singapore's bilingual policy is associated with a clear and consistently implemented language-in-education framework, accompanied by sustained state investment in curriculum, assessment, and teacher development [11].

Vietnamese empirical studies provide critical insights into the local implementation of bilingual education models. Nguyen, T.T.H. & Nguyen, T.N. [15] examined Vietnamese-English bilingual programs at the primary level in Hanoi, finding that schools primarily emphasize English enhancement rather than true bilingual instruction. The study identifies key challenges including limited instructional time, curriculum misalignment, teacher shortages, and inconsistent policy frameworks, despite strong support from administrators and educators. The authors recommend developing Vietnam-specific models that balance Vietnamese and English while adhering to international standards.

Similarly, Hien, N.T.T., Toan, D.V., and Quynh, B.D. [16] trace the evolution of French-Vietnamese bilingual education from 1994 to present, documenting three phases: formation, transition, and innovation. Their survey reveals declining enrollment and teacher numbers, with current programs serving only elite students through selective admission and rigid management. The study advocates for more flexible, inclusive models aligned with Vietnam's practical realities.

For ethnic minority contexts, Van Trang, H. [17] highlights the critical role of Vietnamese language instruction for preschool children in mountainous regions. Despite globalization's demands, teaching faces significant barriers including language barriers, material shortages, and harsh working conditions. The research calls for infrastructure investment, culturally competent teacher training, and supportive learning environments to enhance language education effectiveness among ethnic minority learners.

These Vietnamese studies collectively reveal three key patterns: (1) urban international programs prioritize global languages but struggle with true bilingual balance; (2) selective elite models limit access and scalability; and (3) ethnic minority programs require culturally responsive approaches beyond language instruction alone. These national findings align directly with empirical research published in JST-UD, which underscores that language policies must be contextualized to local socio-cultural demands and supported by continuous teacher capacity building [6], [9].

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to examine trends in bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam. The study draws on policy documents, program descriptions, and academic studies related to language education. A number of relevant documents published between 2010 and 2024 were selected based on their relevance to national policies, educational programs, and empirical research on bilingual education in Vietnam.

The collected data were drawn from three main sources:

(1) National policy documents;

(2) Program descriptions of bilingual education models;

(3) Academic studies published between 2010 and 2024.

The data were then analyzed across three main dimensions: policy orientation, implementation models, and practical challenges and opportunities.

3.1. First source of data: National policy documents

The Education Law [3] No. 43/2019/QH14, effective from July 1, 2020, is currently the core educational legal document in Vietnam, replacing previous versions. It defines the national education system, covering preschool, general, vocational, higher, and continuing education, and sets out the overarching goals, principles, and governance structures of the sector. The Law assigns the Ministry of Education and Training primary responsibility for issuing curricula, setting admission and graduation standards, organizing teacher training, and overseeing quality assurance. It also explicitly encourages and facilitates international cooperation in teaching, learning, and scientific research, thereby creating a legal basis for the development of bilingual and multilingual education programs in Vietnam [3].

Alongside the 2019 Education Law [3], the 2018 General Education Program (CTGDPT 2018) [4], issued by the Ministry of Education and Training on December 26, 2018, is a comprehensive education-oriented program

for all levels of general education. CTGDPT 2018 has a central goal of developing 5 qualities and 10 core competencies for school-age learners, including important competencies such as self-management, communication, problem-solving, language, informatics, physical education, aesthetics, and technology. This is the first time a complete general education program has been issued before the compilation of textbooks, demonstrating openness and a learner-centered approach. The curriculum is divided into two distinct phases: basic education (from grades 1 to 9, focusing on subject integration and reduction of workload) and career-oriented education (from grades 10 to 12, allowing students to choose subjects based on their interests and abilities). Experiential and career-oriented activities are also included in the mandatory curriculum, focusing on practical application and the use of knowledge in real life [4].

Besides general legal documents and national education programs, Vietnam also has a strategy for ethnic minority education with specific policies [5]. This strategy particularly focuses on expanding educational opportunities for ethnic minority students, especially at the preschool and general education levels. A key goal is to develop bilingual programs that help ethnic minority learners gradually transition into the national Vietnamese-medium curriculum while simultaneously preserving and promoting indigenous languages and cultural traditions [5].

To achieve this goal, national policies emphasize the training and professional development of teachers capable of delivering instruction in both Vietnamese and ethnic minority languages, particularly at the preschool, primary, and lower secondary levels. This priority is explicitly stipulated in the Ministry of Education and Training's regulations on ethnic minority language education, which also mandate the development and publication of textbooks and teaching materials in ethnic minority languages [17].

In addition, these programs integrate local history and cultural knowledge into the curriculum to support the development of cultural identity and national awareness among ethnic minority children and adolescents, especially those in compulsory education. This indicates that bilingual and multilingual education is increasingly institutionalized within Vietnam's legal framework.

3.2. Second source of data: The bilingual education program models and ethnic languages

In Vietnam, bilingual and multilingual education models are being implemented in various ways to meet the needs of international integration and cultural preservation. Below are the four common models:

3.2.1. Cambridge International Program in Vietnam

The Cambridge program [18] is implemented in many schools, such as VAS, with three main pathways:

• CEP (Cambridge English Programme): Combining the national education program with basic Cambridge English.

• CAP (Cambridge Advanced Programme): Combining the national education program with the Cambridge International Secondary program.

• CAPI (Cambridge International Programme Integrated): Fully integrated Cambridge international program.

These pathways help school-age learners build a solid bilingual English-Vietnamese foundation, develop comprehensively, and have the opportunity to take Cambridge certificates right at school.

3.2.2. VNEN and U.S. Bilingual Program

Some schools [19], such as The Dewey Schools, are implementing a bilingual program that combines the curriculum of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training with the American international curriculum. In this model, about 45% of the learning duration is taught in English according to the Common Core framework. School-age learners also learn innovative subjects such as Invention, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts. The goal is to help them achieve a high level of English proficiency (potentially reaching IELTS 6.0+) to have the opportunity for direct admission to domestic universities or to receive scholarships for studying abroad. The Dewey Schools are also members of the Council of International Schools (CIS) and are affiliated with Mount Vernon School, one of the leading innovative schools in the United States [19].

3.2.3. The International Baccalaureate (IB) program in Vietnam

Olympia School is the first school in Vietnam to be recognized as an IB World School, implementing the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP) since 2022. This program focuses on the comprehensive development of learners, fostering critical thinking and global integration skills. As of 2024, approximately 21 international schools in Vietnam have been officially authorized by the IB Organization to teach this program [19]. Notable schools include:

• In Ho Chi Minh City: Tesla School, International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC), Australian International School (AIS), British International School (BIS), European International School (EIS), North American International School (SNA), Renaissance International School, Canadian International School (CIS) [19].

• In Hanoi: Westlink International School, United Nations International School (UNIS), Hanoi International School (HIS), Vietnam International School (VIS), BIS – British International School Hanoi, Dewey Schools Bilingual International School [19].

3.2.4. Ethnic language programs

The Ministry of Education and Training [20] has issued a curriculum for the Khmer language and other Vietnamese ethnic languages to preserve and promote the the linguistic and cultural identities of ethnic minority communities. These programs are implemented as bilingual education models combining ethnic minority languages and Vietnamese as the national language, rather than foreign languages such as English. Accordingly, teachers are trained to deliver instruction in both Vietnamese and the relevant ethnic minority language, and ethnic minority language textbooks are developed and introduced into the curriculum in provinces of Vietnam where ethnic minority

populations are concentrated. Beyond language instruction, these programs integrate local history and cultural knowledge to support ethnic minority school-age learners, particularly at the preschool, primary, and lower secondary levels, in developing cultural awareness, identity, and national belonging.

3.3. Third source of data: scientific articles published during the period 2010–2024

Recent empirical studies have provided deep insights into the current state and challenges of the bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam, focusing on both international languages and minority languages.

The study by N. T. T. Ha, and N. T. Nga [15] on the Vietnamese-English bilingual education model at the primary level in Hanoi indicated that schools currently mainly focus on enhancing English rather than truly implementing an official bilingual model. Although both managers and teachers support the development of bilingual education, many difficulties still exist, such as the limited duration of English teaching, an unsuitable curriculum, a shortage of teachers, and inconsistent policies [15]. The research suggests the need to build a model based on international standards but tailored to the specific context of Vietnam, focusing on balancing Vietnamese and English, developing comprehensive language skills, and having clear policies, programs, and curricula.

Regarding bilingual French education, the survey by T. Hien, D. V. Toan, and B. D. Quynh, [16] outlined the development process of French bilingual education programs from 1994 to the present, including the stages of formation, transfer, and innovation. The study also points out existing difficulties such as the decrease in the number of classes, the number of participating school-age learners, and the teaching staff. The current model is primarily for good students, based on selection, with high requirements for French language knowledge and rigid management. The authors propose developing more flexible models, aligned with practical realities, to enhance effectiveness and expand bilingual French education in the Vietnamese general education system.

Regarding second language education in general, especially Vietnamese for ethnic minority school-age learners, H. V. Trang [21] emphasized the important role of language teaching and learning in communication and personal development, particularly in the context of globalization. However, the article also points out that teaching Vietnamese to ethnic minority school-age learners, especially preschool children in mountainous areas, faces many obstacles due to language barriers, lack of learning materials, and difficult working conditions. To enhance the effectiveness of language education, the research suggests increasing investment in infrastructure, training teachers with knowledge of local culture, and creating a supportive learning environment.

These research articles were selected based on their direct and comprehensive relevance to the topic of bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam. They not only reflect the linguistic diversity (from English, French to Vietnamese for ethnic minorities) but also provide deep insights into the current status of implementing bilingual/multilingual education models at various levels and for different groups. Studies published in JST–UD further connect this analysis with the journal's scope by addressing innovation in English language teaching in Vietnamese higher education [6], communicative competence and intercultural awareness in Central Vietnam [7], and policy implementation and pedagogical adaptation in foreign language education in Danang City [9]. These studies highlight implementation challenges and provide a locally relevant basis for the recommendations of this research.

Recent studies published in JST-UD strengthen the connection between this topic and the journal's scope. Huong and Yen examine innovation in English language teaching and learning in Vietnamese higher education, including opportunities and challenges in the era of integration [6]. Hoang and Cuong address the development of English communicative competence and intercultural awareness for learners in Central Vietnam [7]. Ha analyzes policy implementation and pedagogical adaptations in foreign language education in Danang City [9]. Together, these studies provide a locally relevant policy, pedagogy, and implementation perspective for the present analysis.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1. Policy Orientation and Legal Framework for Bilingual and Multilingual Education in Vietnam

Analysis of national policy documents indicates that bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam is not incidental but is strategically embedded in the national education reform agenda.

Specifically, the 2018 General Education Program (GEP) issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) [4] identifies foreign language competence as one of the core competencies to be developed across all levels of general education (MOET, 2018, Part I, Section 3). English is designated as a compulsory subject from Grade 3, with an orientation toward communicative competence and integration with other learning areas.

In parallel, Circular No. 13/2021/TT-BGDĐT provides a legal framework for the implementation of foreign-integrated and bilingual education programs, allowing Vietnamese schools to cooperate with international curricula such as Cambridge Assessment International Education and the International Baccalaureate, under MOET supervision. This policy demonstrates a dual orientation: maintaining national educational sovereignty while selectively integrating international standards.

Furthermore, policies on ethnic minority education - such as the Law on Education [3], Article 7 and Decision No. 1008/QĐ-TTg (2016), explicitly affirm the right of ethnic minority school-age learners to learn and use their mother tongues alongside Vietnamese. These legal provisions collectively indicate a multilayered policy direction that supports both global integration and cultural preservation.

4.2. Implementation Models: Evidence from Programs and Statistics

The policy analysis is supported by evidence from various implementation models across Vietnam.

Vietnamese - English bilingual programs are the most widespread. As of 2025, over 60 international schools operate nationwide, with Vietnam experiencing a 5% growth rate in new international school openings between 2022-2024, reportedly ranking among the top five globally. These schools primarily implement Cambridge IGCSE, A-Level, or IB frameworks. According to the International Baccalaureate Organization, 21 schools in Vietnam offer the IB Diploma Programme (DP), 14 offer the Primary Years Programme (PYP), and 10 offer the Middle Years Programme (MYP) as of 2024 [22].

At international schools, multilingual education extends beyond English. The MOET reports that as of 2025, 41 out of 63 provinces and cities have implemented the 2018 General Education Program for English, and more than 41,489 school-age learners are studying foreign languages other than English, including French, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. This model reflects Vietnam's growing participation in global mobility and foreign investment [23], [24].

In ethnic minority regions, bilingual education follows a different logic, focusing on the integration of Vietnamese and minority languages, as discussed in Section 3.2.4. As of 2021-2022, approximately 30 provinces and cities nationwide organize ethnic minority language classes in schools. Specific implementations include Dien Bien Province, which opened 351 classes with 9,603 young learners learning Thai and Mong languages at the primary level. Son La Province is expected to open around 9 classes with 400 school-age learners annually [25].

4.3. Structural Challenges and Emerging Opportunities for Integration

4.3.1. Structural Challenges

Despite robust policy frameworks, bilingual education implementation faces three systemic challenges that reveal a two-tier system of urban elite success versus rural/ethnic exclusion.

First, uneven teacher capacity persists despite progress: the 2023 MOET report shows 77-87% of general education teachers meet minimum foreign language standards, but 16-23% remain underqualified for CLIL methodologies, with rural and ethnic areas facing acute shortages (MOET targets only 45% qualified ethnic language teachers by 2025) [23], [24].

Second, teaching materials lack standardization. While international programs rely on imported curricula, locally developed bilingual materials - especially for ethnic languages - remain fragmented. The MOET's program prioritizes completing the compilation of textbooks and instructional materials at the primary school level for eight ethnic minority languages by 2025. These patterns necessitate targeted interventions in teacher training, regional resource allocation, and localized material development to achieve national policy goals [25].

Third, regional disparities persist. Urban school-age learners benefit disproportionately from high-quality bilingual programs. In Hanoi alone, as of the 2023-2024 school year, 69,008 school-age learners attended international and bilingual schools (14,201 in international schools and 54,807 in bilingual schools), representing a 4% penetration rate. Meanwhile, rural and ethnic minority school-age learners face limited access due to infrastructure and funding constraints. Research indicates that enrollment rates for ethnic minorities lag significantly: secondary school enrollment is 94.5% for Kinh and Hoa school-age learners compared to 62.8% for Hmong school-age learners [26].

4.3.2. Emerging Opportunities

Building directly on the three challenges identified above, Vietnam has aligned strategic opportunities to achieve national bilingual equity:

Digital transformation resolves teacher capacity gaps (directly targets Challenge 1). Vietnam's Decision 131/QĐ-TTg (2022) mandates 50% digital readiness across education by 2025, prioritizing AI-powered language learning platforms, virtual reality CLIL simulations, and online professional development modules. The TALIS 2024 survey confirms readiness: 64% of Vietnamese teachers actively use AI tools (ranking 5th globally, exceeding OECD's 36% average). This infrastructure enables scalable solutions for the 16-23% underqualified general education teachers lacking CLIL expertise, particularly in remote areas where ethnic language teacher qualification targets only 45% by 2025. Specific applications include: AI-driven adaptive pronunciation training, automated bilingual content generation, and virtual mentoring connecting urban specialists with rural classrooms - directly addressing the regional teacher distribution disparities identified earlier [27]–[29].

Policy convergence eliminates material standardization gaps (directly targets Challenge 2). MOET's 2025 ethnic textbook completion target for eight minority languages (Thai, H'Mong, Khmer, etc.) synchronizes perfectly with national digital infrastructure rollout. This policy convergence creates implementation windows for hybrid digital-physical curricula: cloud-based ethnic language repositories + standardized MOET-approved textbooks. Digital platforms enable real-time updates and regional customization (e.g., localized cultural content), resolving the current fragmentation where international schools use imported materials while ethnic programs lack basic textbooks. The 50% digital readiness target ensures delivery infrastructure reaches even remote provinces, creating national standardization at local scale [27], [29].

This suggests that market-driven expansion could potentially contribute to reducing regional disparities (directly targets Challenge 3). Urban middle-class demand sustains VND 300-900 million annual tuition for bilingual programs, achieving 4% penetration in Hanoi. This private capital ecosystem, 40-60% cheaper than full international curricula, offers scalable replication potential through public-private partnerships (PPP). Strategic deployment could transplant Hanoi’s proven model across 30 ethnic

provinces, leveraging existing fee structures to fund: (1) teacher recruitment bonuses for rural postings, (2) bilingual kindergarten pilots, and (3) local teacher training hubs. This directly counters the 62.8% Hmong versus 94.5% Kinh and Hoa secondary enrollment gap, converting market signals into equitable national access [30].

5. Conclusion

The study suggests that Vietnam is actively engaging with the global shift toward bilingual and multilingual education, as reflected in its expanding range of policies and implementation models. However, the findings also indicate that simply adopting existing international models is unlikely to be sufficient. For bilingual education to be truly effective, it needs to be carefully adapted to Vietnam's specific cultural, linguistic, and regional conditions.

In this regard, the study argues against a dominant form of bilingual education that prioritizes a global language such as English at the expense of learners' first language [2], [31]. Instead, a more appropriate direction for Vietnam is a culturally balanced approach grounded in the principles of additive bilingualism. Such an approach allows school-age learners to develop proficiency in a second language while maintaining and strengthening their mother tongue and cultural identity. This is particularly important in a context like Vietnam, where linguistic diversity is closely tied to cultural heritage. Embedding local knowledge, history, and values into bilingual curricula can therefore play a key role in ensuring that language learning supports, rather than weakens, learners' sense of identity and belonging [1].

More broadly, the analysis shows that bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam is no longer a marginal initiative, but an integral part of ongoing education reform. At the same time, its implementation remains uneven. While urban and internationally oriented schools have achieved notable progress, other areas - especially rural and ethnic minority regions - continue to face significant constraints.

Three main challenges emerge from the study. First, teacher capacity remains a critical issue. Although many teachers meet general language standards, a substantial proportion are not yet equipped for bilingual or CLIL-based teaching. This gap is particularly evident in disadvantaged areas. Second, teaching materials are still not fully standardized. There is a clear contrast between well-resourced international programs and locally developed bilingual or ethnic language materials, which often lack consistency and coherence. Third, regional disparities continue to shape access to bilingual education, resulting in unequal learning opportunities across different groups of school-age learners.

At the same time, these challenges also open up several important opportunities. The current wave of digital transformation, for instance, offers new ways to rethink teacher training. Technology can support more flexible and continuous professional development, making it possible to reach teachers in remote areas more effectively than traditional models. In addition, recent policy developments show increasing alignment between curriculum goals and digital infrastructure, which may help improve the availability and quality of bilingual teaching materials on a broader scale.

The growing demand for bilingual education, especially among urban middle-class families, also plays a significant role. This demand has contributed to the expansion of the private sector, which, if properly guided, could help extend access to bilingual education through public–private partnerships. However, it is important to approach this carefully. Market-driven expansion does not automatically lead to greater equity, and without appropriate regulation, it may reinforce existing inequalities rather than reduce them.

Based on these findings, the recommendations proposed in this analysis should be understood as emerging directly from the analysis. The need for a more coherent national framework, stronger teacher development, and more context-sensitive evaluation approaches reflects the specific gaps identified in the Vietnamese context, rather than general or abstract policy suggestions.

Finally, the study highlights the need for further research to support more evidence-based decision-making. In particular, there is a need for longitudinal and mixed-method studies that can provide a clearer understanding of the long-term impacts of bilingual education on academic outcomes, cognitive development, and social integration. Greater attention should also be given to ethnic minority contexts and to the role of educational technology, including both its potential benefits and its practical limitations.

In conclusion, the future of bilingual and multilingual education in Vietnam will depend not only on expanding existing programs, but on how effectively different elements - policy, technology, and market forces - can be aligned. If this alignment is achieved, it offers a meaningful opportunity to reduce current disparities and build a more inclusive and sustainable system. If not, there is a real risk that existing gaps will continue to persist, or even become more pronounced.

Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the Editorial Board and reviewers of the Journal of Science and Technology - University of Da Nang (JST-UD) for contributing valuable opinions to complete the article. This research is supported by internal scientific research funding of Binh Duong University.

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