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Teacher Professional Reasoning for AI-Mediated Language Teaching Under Multi-Level AI Governance: An Embedded Multiple-Case Study

Phuong Anh Ngo* 
 Hanoi University
 Hanoi, Vietnam

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Abstract. Generative artificial intelligence is reshaping teaching, learning, assessment, and professional practice in English as a Foreign Language. However, little is known about how university teachers exercise professional reasoning within emerging AI governance environments. This embedded qualitative multiple-case study explored how university teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Vietnam reasoned professionally about generative artificial intelligence. The study combined semi-structured interviews with 13 teachers from 13 universities and an analysis of 88 policy and governance documents comprising 10 national, 7 ministerial, and 71 institutional documents. A documented search, screening, inventory, and staged coding procedure enabled the systematic identification, classification, and analysis of the document corpus. Interview and documentary data were analysed separately, first within cases and governance levels and then across cases using matrices and joint displays. Findings showed that teachers' professional reasoning was developed through continual negotiation between classroom realities and multi-level AI governance. Participants moved beyond their traditional roles as language experts to become learning designers, pedagogical facilitators, critical mentors, and ethical guides. They set context-appropriate boundaries for AI use, reframed ethics in terms of transparency and cognitive engagement, and adapted assessment to preserve evidence of student learning. The documents revealed a layered but uneven governance landscape. National strategies articulated broad directions; ministerial documents provided partial guidance; and institutional policies varied considerably. The integration of the two datasets showed that AI literacy, governance, assessment, ethics, and teacher agency were interconnected with teachers' professional reasoning. The study proposed the

* Corresponding author: Phuong Anh Ngo; Anhnped@hanu.edu.vn

governance-informed Identity-Agency-Ethics-Assessment Practices heuristic for understanding AI-mediated teacher professionalism.

Keywords: AI governance; English as a Foreign Language; generative artificial intelligence; professional reasoning; teacher professionalism

1. Introduction

The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), particularly large language models such as ChatGPT, has generated intense debate across education and language teaching (Kasneci et al., 2023). For university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, GenAI is more than another educational technology. It can generate fluent language, instructional materials, assessment tasks, and formative feedback. Empirical and review studies have consequently identified challenges to teacher expertise, student authorship, academic integrity, and the credibility of assessment evidence (Corbin et al., 2025; Kofinas et al., 2025; Moorhouse et al., 2024).

Recent policy and research have also begun to treat GenAI as a governance issue rather than solely as a technological development. Emerging AI governance emphasises principles such as transparency, accountability, human oversight, and responsible AI use while leaving room for local interpretation (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023). Teachers' professional decisions are, therefore, shaped by both the affordances of AI and the governance environments in which its educational use is interpreted, regulated, and enacted.

Vietnam provides a particularly relevant context for examining these dynamics. The national and ministerial documents examined in the study positioned AI, digital transformation, innovation, and English-language development as priorities for educational modernisation (see Table 2). Institutional documents, however, showed varied university responses; a small number had issued or were developing AI-specific guidance, whereas most relied on or adapted existing regulations concerning academic integrity, assessment, research, quality assurance, intellectual property, and digital transformation. Hence, the observed variability is grounded in the documentary corpus rather than assumed *a priori*.

Within this uneven governance landscape, university EFL teachers occupy a pivotal role. Research on institutional AI governance indicates that formal policies commonly articulate broad principles while leaving instructors considerable discretion over classroom implementation (An et al., 2025; Chan, 2023; Jin et al., 2025; Parker et al., 2025). Teachers, therefore, act as policy translators, supporting responsible innovation while making context-sensitive decisions about assessment validity, academic integrity, and meaningful language learning (An et al., 2025; Chan, 2023; Jin et al., 2025; Parker et al., 2025).

Recent studies have examined aspects of this work but usually in separate research streams. Moorhouse et al. (2024), Huang et al. (2025), and Prilop et al. (2025) investigated teacher AI literacy and professional competence. Beijaard et al. (2004), Zhang et al. (2025), and Farazouli et al. (2025) addressed identity and professional adaptation, and Priestley et al. (2015) and Emans et al. (2025) conceptualised ecological agency. Corbin et al. (2025), Kofinas et al. (2025), and Cui et al. (2025) examined assessment validity and redesign, while An et al. (2025), Jin et al. (2025), Luo (2024), and Parker et al. (2025) primarily analysed policies, guidelines, or stakeholder perceptions. Few studies have treated multi-level policy documents as empirical evidence and connected them to teachers' accounts across matched teacher-institution cases. It, therefore, remains unclear how these dimensions are integrated into teachers' professional reasoning.

This study responded to these gaps by using an embedded qualitative multiple-case design involving semi-structured interviews with 13 university EFL teachers from 13 universities and an analysis of a systematically screened corpus of 88 governance documents (10 national, 7 ministerial, and 71 institutional). To facilitate systematic analysis of this extensive corpus, the documents were organised in a structured inventory, classified by governance level and institution, coded separately at each level, and subsequently compared through cross-case matrices. The study explored how teachers interpreted governance expectations within their teaching contexts and defined professional reasoning as the situated work of interpreting, negotiating, justifying, and enacting AI-related decisions.

The following four research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How is GenAI conceptualised and governed across national, ministerial, and institutional policy documents relevant to Vietnamese higher education?

RQ2: How do university EFL teachers describe changes in their professional identity in response to GenAI?

RQ3: How do university EFL teachers exercise pedagogical agency, negotiate ethical responsibilities, and adapt assessment practices under AI-mediated conditions?

RQ4: In what ways did teachers align with, extend, or substitute for national, ministerial, and institutional AI governance when making classroom decisions across the 13 teacher-institution cases?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher AI Literacy, Professional Identity, and Professional Adaptation to GenAI

Contemporary scholarship conceptualises teacher AI literacy as a multidimensional construct extending beyond operational competence to encompass pedagogical knowledge, ethical awareness, critical evaluation, professional judgement, and the capacity to guide responsible AI use (Moorhouse et al., 2024; Prilop et al., 2025; Sperling et al., 2024). Research on GenAI-supported professional development of teachers similarly suggests that effective preparation requires the integration of

technical, pedagogical, ethical, reflective, and evaluative competencies (Shenoy & Saarela, 2026).

Recent empirical studies have moved beyond technology acceptance to examine how GenAI influences teachers' professional identities, roles, and adaptation. Farazouli et al. (2025) documented university teachers' continuing negotiation of pedagogy and responsibility under uncertainty. Zhang et al. (2025) showed how teachers reconciled emerging AI-related roles with established professional values. Moreover, Kohnke et al. (2025) and Prilop et al. (2025) identified intertwined technical, pedagogical, critical, and ethical dimensions of preparedness.

Related qualitative evidence from flipped blended language teaching showed that technological innovation can shift teachers from knowledge transmitters to learning designers, facilitators, and providers of scaffolding (Ngo, 2026). Although that setting did not involve GenAI, it illustrates a broader process of professional adaptation. Teachers reassess which activities add educational value, redistribute guidance between pre-class and classroom spaces, and reconstruct their roles in response to learners' changing needs (Ngo, 2026). Systematic reviews, however, show that research on GenAI continues to focus more on applications than on sustained teacher professional development and the institutional conditions that enable it (Tan et al., 2025).

2.2 Governance, University Guidelines, and Policy Variation Regarding AI

The governance of AI is increasingly conceptualised as the policies, institutional arrangements, and ethical principles through which universities regulate and support the responsible integration of AI into teaching, learning, assessment, and research (Chan, 2023; Jin et al., 2025). This shift reflects the growing recognition that effective AI integration depends not only on technological innovation but also on transparent governance, stakeholder engagement, accountability, and institutional capacity to support responsible AI use. Recent comparative analyses further suggest that universities are gradually moving away from blanket prohibitions and towards adaptive approaches that permit context-sensitive AI use while seeking to protect academic integrity and educational quality (An et al., 2025; Jin et al., 2025).

Despite this overall movement, institutional policies and guidelines vary according to universities' regulatory traditions, disciplinary profiles, risk tolerance, resources, and stages of policy development. Comparative studies report variation in scope, intended stakeholders, disclosure requirements, disciplinary coverage, and instructor discretion (McDonald et al., 2024; Parker et al., 2025). Some universities provide comprehensive guidance across teaching, assessment, research, and administration, whereas others frame GenAI mainly as an academic-integrity risk. Policies based primarily on risk control may define prohibited practices and disclosure requirements but offer limited pedagogical guidance on designing AI-supported activities, determining permissible assistance or redesigning assessment (An et al., 2025; Parker et al., 2025).

Policy research has advanced the understanding of institutional responses to GenAI, but existing evidence remains divided between policy-focused and teacher-focused studies. An et al. (2025) and Jin et al. (2025) mapped institutional policies and guidelines. Luo (2024) critically reviewed assessment policies, and Parker et al. (2025) compared policies across five countries. These studies highlight policy content but do not connect policy documents with accounts from teachers working in the institutions concerned. Conversely, teacher-focused studies such as the studies of Farazouli et al. (2025) and Kohnke et al. (2025) examine teachers' experiences and preparedness but do not trace how these are shaped by governance at national, ministerial, and institutional levels. Consequently, limited evidence exists on how teachers interpret, negotiate, and enact multiple levels of AI governance in situated classroom practice. The present study addresses this gap by connecting teachers' accounts with the governance contexts of their respective institutions and analysing their interaction across embedded teacher-institution cases.

2.3 Assessment Redesign, Academic Integrity, and Validity

The emergence of GenAI has challenged long-established assumptions underpinning educational assessment. Homework essays, reports, and other written assignments can now be completed with substantial AI assistance, meaning that the quality of a submitted product may no longer provide trustworthy evidence of a student's independent capability (Corbin et al., 2025; Kofinas et al., 2025).

The concern, therefore, extends beyond plagiarism to construct validity. Accordingly, AI assistance may alter the construct being assessed, obscure the source of the demonstrated knowledge or reasoning, and weaken inferences about students' authorship and independent language ability. Moreover, attempts to control GenAI through automated detection may unfairly penalise students because detection tools can produce both false-positive and false-negative judgements (Kofinas et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2024). These concerns have prompted calls for explicit ethical guidance and assessment redesign rather than reliance on detection alone (Al-Ghamdi et al., 2026; Fount et al., 2024).

Proposed responses emphasise process-orientated assessment, authentic learning activities, iterative drafting, oral defence, collaborative inquiry, and supervised performance tasks to generate evidence not only of final performance but also of students' reasoning, decision-making, and learning processes (Corbin et al., 2025; Fount et al., 2024). At the same time, teachers require expanded assessment literacy to determine when AI assistance is pedagogically appropriate, what forms of use should be disclosed, and how fairness, transparency, privacy, and equitable access can be protected (Cui et al., 2025).

Assessment redesign is complex because changing a task does not automatically restore the validity of the resulting evidence. Experienced markers may struggle to distinguish AI-assisted work from work that is independently produced, while apparently authentic tasks can remain vulnerable when they continue to rely

primarily on an unverifiable final product (Corbin et al., 2025; Kofinas et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2024). Messick's (1989) framework provides the theoretical basis (i.e., validity is concerned with the interpretation and use of assessment evidence and is not a property of the task alone). Accordingly, teachers must align learning outcomes, elicitation conditions, process evidence, and judgement criteria while weighing ethical and institutional constraints (Cui et al., 2025; Fountoukidis et al., 2024). This makes professional reasoning central to defensible assessment redesign (Cui et al., 2025; Kavanagh et al., 2020).

2.4 Teacher Professional Reasoning as the Analytical Lens

Teacher professional reasoning remains a defining characteristic of professional teaching because teachers must interpret complex situations and exercise informed judgement rather than apply knowledge mechanically (Shulman, 1987, 1998). It is conceptualised as situated, evidence-informed, and open to professional justification (Kavanagh et al., 2020; Loughran, 2019). In this study, professional reasoning, therefore, refers to the interpretive and justificatory work through which teachers connect educational purposes, contextual knowledge, ethical commitments, policy expectations, and available evidence when making and explaining judgements.

Professional reasoning is conceptually related to, but distinct from, teacher agency. Pedagogical-reasoning scholarship concerns how teachers interpret situations, evaluate alternatives, and justify action (Kavanagh et al., 2020; Loughran, 2019), whereas ecological agency concerns their capacity to act purposefully within sociocultural and institutional conditions (Priestley et al., 2015). Agency is an emergent achievement rather than a stable personal attribute that is shaped by professional histories, future aspirations, resources, and organisational environments (Emans et al., 2025). Reasoning concerns the actions that teachers consider educationally and ethically defensible, whereas agency concerns whether and how those actions are enacted.

Four specific gaps emerge from the literature. First, AI literacy, identity, agency, ethics, and assessment are often examined separately, leaving their integration through professional reasoning undertheorised (Moorhouse et al., 2024; Prilop et al., 2025; Sperling et al., 2024). Second, policy studies and teacher-focused studies rarely connect governance documents with teachers' accounts from the corresponding institutions (An et al., 2025; Jin et al., 2025; Luo, 2024; Parker et al., 2025). Third, few studies combine interviews with multi-level documentary analysis across matched teacher-institution cases. Finally, evidence from Vietnamese and Southeast Asian higher education remains limited. This study addressed these gaps through an embedded multiple-case analysis of teacher interviews and national, ministerial, and institutional documents.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This study drew on teacher professional reasoning as its central analytical lens (Figure 1), bringing together insights from pedagogical reasoning (Loughran, 2019; Shulman, 1987, 1998) and ecological agency (Priestley et al., 2015). Professional reasoning was understood as the situated process through which teachers interpret and connect evidence, educational purposes, ethical commitments, and governance expectations when justifying and enacting decisions. Multi-level governance constituted the policy environment. Classroom realities, learner needs, and disciplinary contexts shaped teachers' interpretations. Four sensitising domains guided the analysis: professional identity, agency, ethical responsibility, and assessment judgement and practice. These domains were treated as interconnected constructs rather than independent constructs or stages in a causal sequence (Beijaard et al., 2004; Emans et al., 2025; Kavanagh et al., 2020). The framework thus directed attention to how the four domains interacted within each teacher-institution case.

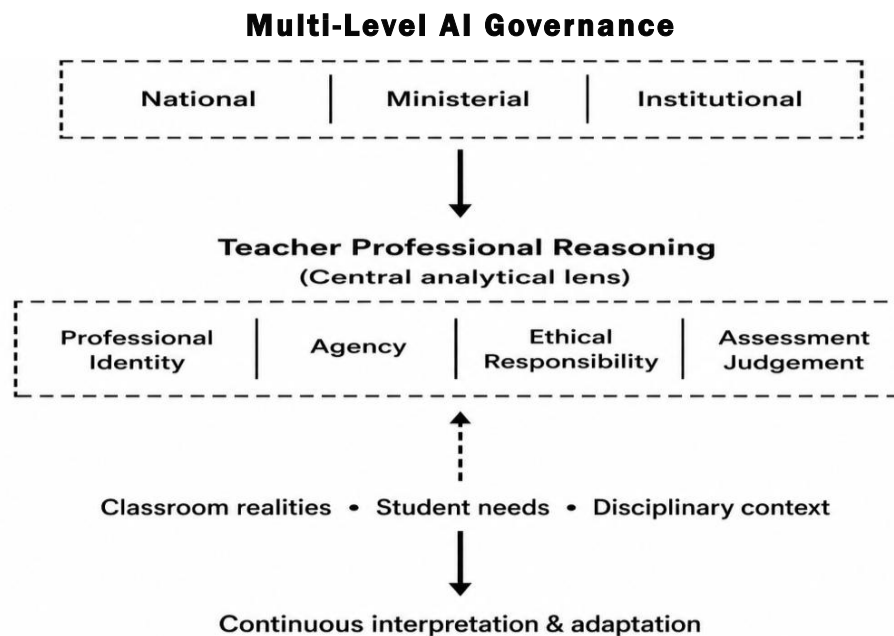


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of teacher professional reasoning under multi-level AI governance

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted an embedded qualitative multiple-case design (Yin, 2018). A multiple-case design examines a phenomenon across several bounded contexts, and an embedded structure allows each case to contain a defined unit of analysis. In the current study, each university provided a case context, and one EFL teacher and the relevant institutional governance documents formed the embedded teacher-institution unit. This structure enabled the within-case analysis of a teacher's professional reasoning in relation to the institutional governance environment,

followed by cross-case comparison across 13 contrasting institutions. Because only one teacher participated from each university, each participant's account was interpreted as a situated perspective rather than representative of the institution.

The study drew on two complementary forms of qualitative evidence. Semi-structured interviews used common questions and flexible follow-up prompts to elicit the teachers' experiences, decisions, and justifications concerning professional identity, agency, ethics, assessment, and institutional influence. The policy and governance documents provided non-reactive evidence of formally stated priorities, rules, and responsibilities at national, ministerial, and institutional levels. The interview data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021), whereas the documents underwent qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009). The datasets were analysed independently and then integrated through within-case matrices, cross-case comparisons, and joint displays. The study was reported with reference to the COREQ checklist (Tong et al., 2007).

3.2 Participants and Research Context

The study involved 13 university EFL teachers from 13 Vietnamese universities, representing diverse institutional missions, disciplinary orientations, governance contexts, levels of teaching experience, course types, and degrees of prior GenAI engagement (Table 1).

Participants were recruited through purposive maximum-variation sampling. Eligibility required current university-level EFL teaching, direct experience with GenAI in teaching or assessment, and a willingness to discuss institutional influences on professional decisions. Selection sought variation in institutional type and mission (including law, commerce, communication, business, technology, engineering, teacher education, and multidisciplinary institutions), regional location, teaching experience, course type, GenAI experience, and formal AI-related training. The study sought analytical rather than statistical generalisation (Yin, 2018) by comparing how teachers addressed similar professional challenges across different governance environments.

The final number of 13 cases was determined by the comparative aims of the study and the adequacy of information-rich coverage rather than by numerical representativeness. Recruitment continued until the sample covered the intended range of institutions and teacher profiles, and later interviews added no substantively different perspectives on identity, agency, ethics, assessment judgement, or practice. The sample, therefore, supported cross-case interpretation but did not claim exhaustive saturation or national representativeness. The participants' characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant profiles and teaching contexts

Participant	Institutional focus (anonymised)	Teaching experience	Course types	GenAI experience	Formal AI-related training
P1	Law-focused university	11–15 years	ESP (Legal English)	Extensive	Self-directed/informal
P2	Trade and commerce-focused university	Over 15 years	General English, EAP, ESP	Moderate	Self-directed/informal
P3	Communication-focused university	11–15 years	General English, EAP, ESP	Moderate	Yes
P4	Business-focused university	Over 15 years	General English, EAP, ESP	Extensive	Self-directed/informal
P5	Engineering university	1–5 years	General English, EAP, ESP	Moderate	Yes
P6	Language-focused multidisciplinary university	Over 15 years	Linguistics, British American Studies, Phonetics, Applied Linguistics, Research Methods	Extensive	Self-directed/informal
P7	Marine university	Over 16 years	Academic Writing, EAP	Extensive	Yes
P8	Polytechnic university	Over 15 years	General English (language skills)	Moderate	Self-directed/informal
P9	Regional multidisciplinary university	Over 15 years	General English, EAP, ESP	Moderate	Self-directed/informal
P10	Regional comprehensive university	5–10 years	General English, EAP, ESP, English Linguistics (Semantics, Syntax, Morphology, Phonetics and Phonology)	Extensive	Yes
P11	Military-focused university	1–5 years	General English	Moderate	Yes
P12	Teacher education university	Over 15 years	General English, English Language	Extensive	Self-directed/informal

Participant	Institutional focus (anonymised)	Teaching experience	Course types	GenAI experience	Formal AI-related training
			Teaching Methodology		
P13	Industry-focused university	Over 15 years	General English, ESP	Extensive	Self-directed/informal

Note. EAP = *English for Academic Purposes*; ESP = *English for Specific Purposes*

Each participant represented one embedded teacher-institution case. Institutional names were anonymised, and participants were not treated as institutional spokespersons.

Table 1 shows deliberate variation across institutional type, disciplinary orientation, experience, teaching responsibility, level of AI use, and training. Eight participants had more than 15 years of teaching experience, and two participants had five years or less. Seven participants reported extensive GenAI experience, and five participants had received formal AI-related training. This heterogeneity supported the comparison across contrasting professional and governance contexts.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Interview

One interview guide (Appendix) was used with all 13 participants. It covered six domains (i.e., professional identity, pedagogical agency, ethical responsibility, assessment practices, institutional influence, and future professional development). Interviews lasted approximately 50–70 minutes and were conducted in Vietnamese, recorded with informed consent, and transcribed verbatim.

The common protocol allowed the participants to elaborate on issues relevant to their practice. Follow-up prompts encouraged them to describe critical incidents, explain pedagogical decisions, distinguish personal judgement from institutional expectations, and consider how their contexts shaped their responses to GenAI. Interviews were conducted in a non-hierarchical manner, and reflexive memoing accompanied data collection.

3.3.2 Documents

The second dataset consisted of 88 policy and governance documents comprising 10 national, 7 ministerial, and 71 institutional documents collected from the 13 participating universities (Table 2). The documents were analysed as empirical evidence of the governance environments in which teachers exercised professional reasoning rather than merely contextual background.

The corpus included two categories established before the final screening. Core documents explicitly addressed AI, GenAI, AI ethics, digital or AI competence, or guidance for AI use in teaching, assessment, research, or academic integrity.

Contextual documents contained provisions relevant to AI-mediated practice in areas such as assessment, academic integrity, research management, quality assurance, intellectual property, data governance, and digital transformation. The distinction was analytical rather than hierarchical, and each document's classification and inclusion rationale were recorded in the document inventory.

The institutional dataset covered all 13 participating universities, with 3 to 10 documents from each. Documents were organised by institution and governance domain, allowing each teacher's account to be examined in relation to the corresponding policy environment. Variation in the number and scope of the documents (Table 2) was treated as evidence of uneven governance development rather than as an indicator of institutional quality.

Table 2: Composition of the policy and governance corpus

Governance level	Issuing authorities / sources	Number of documents	Main documentary scope
National	National Assembly, Government, Prime Minister and central-level authorities	10	AI strategy and legislation, digital transformation, data and cybersecurity governance, innovation, education, and human-resource development
Ministerial	Ministry of Education and Training (5), Ministry of Science and Technology (2)	7	Educational digital transformation, learner and teacher digital competence, AI education, implementation guidance, trustworthy AI evaluation, scientific integrity, and research ethics
Institutional	13 Vietnamese higher education institutions	71	AI-related guidance, training and assessment, academic integrity, research ethics and management, quality assurance, intellectual property, digital transformation, and institutional governance
Total		88	Multi-level policy and governance corpus

3.4 Document Selection

Document collection was carried out from January to March 2026 and followed by a final source verification at the end of March 2026. National- and ministerial-level materials were identified through official government websites and public legal databases. The bilingual search protocol combined AI-related and educational-governance terms, spelling variants, backward searches of cited instruments, and manual searches of policy repositories. Search dates, sources, terms, and candidate records were logged in the audit trail.

Candidate laws, national strategies, government decisions, ministerial circulars, guidelines, and policy statements were screened by title and issuing authority, followed by full-text reviews. Document status, issue date, and effective date were recorded to distinguish binding instruments from strategies, guidelines, and institutional regulations.

Institutional materials were collected from university websites, or when unavailable online, directly from participating institutions. These included regulations on undergraduate education, assessment and examinations, academic integrity, plagiarism, research management, and digital transformation in addition to faculty- or school-level GenAI guidance where available.

The search initially identified 123 documents. Documents were included if they were officially issued, current during the study period, relevant to higher education or its policy context, and applicable to AI-supported education, research, integrity, or institutional governance. Duplicates, superseded versions, unofficial commentary, inaccessible records, and documents lacking substantive governance relevance were excluded. The final corpus contained 88 documents (10 national, 7 ministerial, and 71 institutional documents). The corpus was bounded by the final verification date. Later policy changes were not retroactively incorporated.

The document inventory recorded each item's title, issuing authority, year, governance level, institutional affiliation, type, inclusion rationale, source, and screening decision. Together with the staged coding matrices, this inventory provided an auditable record of corpus selection and analysis.

3.5 Data Preparation

The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese and translated into English by a professional translator specialising in education and applied linguistics. A bilingual applied-linguistics specialist reviewed all translated excerpts, prioritising conceptual meaning, evaluative stance, and discipline-specific terminology over literal equivalence (Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004).

Policy documents were compiled into a searchable dataset and assigned unique identifiers indicating governance level, issuing authority, document type, year of publication, and institutional affiliation. The associated metadata supported transparency and traceability during analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Interview and documentary data were analysed separately and integrated during interpretation.

3.6.1 Interview Analysis

Interview data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). The process involved familiarisation with the Vietnamese transcripts and translated excerpts, descriptive and interpretive coding, and within-case analysis of identity, agency, ethics, assessment, and governance. Thereafter, the analysis included development and review of candidate themes, cross-case comparison, and final theme definition. Coding was recursive rather than linear, and reflexive memos documented interpretive changes, divergent cases, and the researcher's role in developing themes. Themes were treated as analytic constructions, not as categories requiring coder consensus.

Table 3: Illustrative examples of the interview coding process

Interview excerpt	Initial code	Focused category	Theme
"I no longer see myself mainly as a provider of knowledge" (P1).	Teacher role changed	Identity repositioning	Professional identity
"I don't ban AI. I decide where it helps learning" (P4).	Boundary setting	Pedagogical judgement	Pedagogical agency
"The issue is whether students still do the thinking" (P6).	Cognitive responsibility	Ethical reasoning	Ethical responsibility
"Assessment has to show students' thinking" (P7).	Assessment redesign	Validity preservation	Assessment judgement and practice

As Table 3 shows, participants' accounts of changing roles, boundary setting, student thinking, and assessment redesign developed into four themes, namely professional identity, pedagogical agency, ethical responsibility, and assessment judgement and practice.

3.6.2 Document Analysis

Policy documents were analysed using qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009). First, metadata, policy status, governance level, institutional affiliation, date, and inclusion rationale were recorded. Second, documents were examined for definitions, principles, responsible actors, educational domains, and operational mechanisms. Third, relevant passages were coded for AI conceptualisation, human oversight, transparency, accountability, AI competence, academic integrity, assessment validity, and implementation responsibility. Finally, codes were compared within and across governance levels to identify continuities, omissions, and differences in operational specificity. Claims were based on the documentary content and status without assuming that written policy had been fully implemented in practice.

Table 4 illustrates how documentary excerpts were coded and grouped into governance themes. The examples show how broad principles such as human oversight and AI competence were translated, or not, into institutional requirements concerning disclosure, verification, and assessment evidence.

Table 4: Illustrative examples of policy coding

Policy excerpt	Initial code	Analytical theme
National: <i>"AI shall be human centred and serve rather than replace human judgement"</i> (NP01).	Human-centred AI	Governance principles
MoET: <i>"Develop learners' digital competence and AI literacy"</i> (MOS02).	AI competence	Educational governance
University: <i>"AI-generated assignments require disclosure and teacher verification"</i> (U2D4.S3.1).	AI transparency	Institutional operationalisation
University: <i>"Similarity reports cannot be used as the sole evidence of academic misconduct"</i> (U3D3.S3.1).	Limits of automated detection	Assessment governance

MoET: Ministry of Education and Training

Governance environments were grouped into three analytical configurations (i.e., AI-specific governance, AI-integrated governance, and general governance without AI-specific operationalisation). Institutions developing dedicated AI guidance were included in the first configuration and marked accordingly. These categories described differences in policy development, not institutional quality.

3.6.3 Integration of Datasets

The datasets were integrated only after the separate interviews and the development of the document themes. A case matrix linked each participant's interview themes to the governance configuration and relevant policy domains of the corresponding institution. Joint displays then compared the 13 teacher-institution cases across professional identity, agency, ethical responsibility, assessment judgement and practice, and policy-practice interaction. Cross-case comparison generated three interaction modes involving alignment with existing guidance, extension beyond its provisions, and substitution where teachers developed practices in the absence of operational guidance. Divergent cases were also examined. Integration relied on comparison and explanation rather than merged coding or the use of one dataset solely to confirm the other.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was supported by reflexive memoing, an audit trail, and dialogic review with an experienced qualitative researcher. Approximately 30% of the interview transcripts and a purposively selected subset of policy documents were reviewed by an experienced qualitative researcher who questioned coding assumptions, theme boundaries, and alternative interpretations. The purpose was reflexive refinement rather than consensus coding or inter-coder reliability.

3.8 Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher is a Vietnamese university EFL teacher and former academic manager with experience in technology-based language education, assessment, and institutional governance. This insider knowledge aided access, contextual interpretation, and follow-up questioning but could also favour interpretations

consistent with the researcher's commitment to responsible technology use. Reflexive memos documented prior assumptions, analytic decisions, and evidence that challenged emerging interpretations. Divergent accounts were actively examined. The two datasets remained separate until integration, and dialogic review tested whether the claims exceeded the evidence. These procedures made the researcher's standpoint and its potential influence explicit rather than claiming to eliminate it.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

All 13 participants received information about the study and provided informed consent before the interviews. Their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. Identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Policy documents were either publicly available or provided with permission and were used solely for research purposes. Data was stored securely and accessed only by the researcher.

4. Results

4.1 Multi-Level AI Governance in Vietnamese Higher Education (RQ1)

Analysis of the 88 documents revealed a layered but uneven governance structure. National policies established strategic and normative priorities, ministerial documents translated them into educational guidance, and universities operationalised them with varying specificity. Table 5 compares the main themes across the three levels.

Table 5: Vertical comparison of governance themes across policy levels

Governance theme	National level	Ministerial level	Institutional level	Vertical pattern
AI innovation and digital transformation	Strong strategic emphasis	Competence and implementation frameworks	Commonly embedded in institutional plans	Broad continuity, uneven operationalisation
Human-centred AI and human oversight	Explicit normative principle	Applied to educational and professional practice	Rarely converted into classroom-level procedures	Strong at macro level; weaker operational specificity
Transparency and accountability	Statutory/normative expectations	Linked to responsible AI and integrity	Reflected unevenly through disclosure and integrity rules	Partial downward translation
Digital/AI competence	National capability priority	Explicit learner and teacher frameworks	Mainly training and digital-transformation initiatives	Strongest operationalisation at ministerial level
Academic integrity	Broad accountability expectations	Research integrity and ethical guidance	Often operationalised through plagiarism and	Strong institutional legacy, limited GenAI specificity

Governance theme	National level	Ministerial level	Institutional level	Vertical pattern
			research regulations	
Assessment validity	General quality and learner protection concern	Emerging educational attention	Detailed assessment regulation but limited GenAI guidance	Major governance gap
Research and data governance	Integrity, privacy, and accountability	Scientific integrity and trustworthy AI	Research ethics, intellectual property, quality assurance, and data/infrastructure rules	Often stronger in research than teaching

Table 5 indicates broad continuity in policy priorities but uneven translation from national principles into institutional practice. Digital and AI competence received the clearest ministerial guidance, whereas human oversight, transparency, and assessment validity were rarely translated into classroom procedures. Institutional responses also varied considerably across the 13 universities.

4.1.1 National and Ministerial Principles

National documents positioned AI as a driver of digital transformation, innovation, and educational modernisation, emphasising transparency, accountability, human oversight, and responsible innovation. For example, the Artificial Intelligence Law (Law No. 134/2025/QH15) states that AI should be “*human-centred*” and should “*serve rather than replace human judgement and responsibility*”, making human oversight a core governance principle (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2025). Ministerial documents translated these priorities into expectations for AI literacy, digital competence, responsible AI use, teacher development, and curriculum innovation. However, they provided limited direction for day-to-day classroom practice, leaving universities to interpret and operationalise these expectations locally.

4.1.2 Institutional Variation

Institutional governance showed greater variation. Only a small number of universities had issued or were developing AI-specific guidance. Most relied on existing regulations concerning assessment, academic integrity, research, quality assurance, intellectual property, or digital transformation. Three configurations were identified through iterative comparison: AI-specific governance, AI-integrated governance, and general governance without AI-specific operationalisation (Table 6). These categories described policy architecture, not institutional quality.

Table 6: Institutional AI governance configurations across the 13 universities

Governance configuration	Governance characteristics	Cases
AI-specific governance	Dedicated AI policies or explicit institutional guidance regulating AI use in teaching, assessment, research, or academic integrity.	U2, U4
AI-integrated governance	AI incorporated within broader institutional regulations governing assessment, research, academic integrity, digital transformation, or institutional governance.	U3
General governance without AI-specific operationalisation	AI not explicitly regulated. Existing regulations governing education, assessment, research, academic integrity, quality assurance, intellectual property, and digital transformation provide the principal governance context for AI-related practices.	U1, U5–U13

Note. U4 was developing AI-specific institutional guidance at the time of document collection.

Table 6 shows that only two institutions had introduced or were developing AI-specific guidance. Moreover, one institution had integrated AI into broader regulations and ten institutions relied on general governance. Most institutions were, therefore, adapting existing mechanisms rather than establishing dedicated AI policies. This pattern provided teachers with different levels of guidance. Those in AI-specific or AI-integrated settings could draw on explicit provisions, whereas those in general-governance settings had to interpret broader rules for classroom AI use.

4.1.3 Governance Context for Professional Reasoning

Across the three levels, policies provided broad principles but limited classroom-level direction. National priorities were translated into ministerial guidance and then operationalised unevenly across institutions, leaving teachers with considerable responsibility for interpreting AI governance in practice. This context frames the analysis of professional reasoning presented below.

4.2 Professional Identity Under Multi-Level AI Governance (RQ2)

Across the 13 teacher-institution cases, participants consistently described GenAI as reshaping rather than diminishing their professional identity. While policy documents promoted innovation, responsible AI use, and digital competence, they provided little guidance on teachers' changing roles. The participants, therefore, reconsidered what constituted professional expertise in AI-mediated language education (Table 7).

Table 7: Professional identity under multi-level AI governance

Subtheme	Representative participants
Learning designer role	P1, P3, P5, P9, P10, P12
Epistemic and ethical guide	P1, P6, P9, P10
Pedagogical judgement	P4, P6, P10, P11, P12
Contextual expertise	P4, P5, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13

4.2.1 Learning Designer Role

Participants consistently reported that GenAI reduced the importance of teachers as primary sources of linguistic knowledge while increasing their responsibility for designing learning experiences that required interpretation, reflection, and critical thinking. As P3 explained, *“Before ChatGPT, students came to me mainly because I knew English better than they did. Now they can obtain fluent language almost instantly. My role has shifted towards designing learning activities that require thinking rather than simply producing language”*.

P1 described a similar shift: *“The teacher’s value no longer lies simply in providing information but in guiding students, verifying information, and explaining it within a specific context”*. P5 also anticipated moving from knowledge provider to learning designer, with greater emphasis on authentic disciplinary communication and learner identity. Together, these accounts located teachers’ changing roles in the transmission of language knowledge to include the design and guidance of learning.

4.2.2 Epistemic and Ethical Guidance

Participants also positioned themselves as guides who helped students to evaluate AI-generated content for reliability, appropriateness, bias, and limitations. The participants described helping students to judge reliability, appropriateness, bias, and limitations. P6 explained, *“Students no longer need me simply because I know English. They need me because I can help them judge whether AI is correct, appropriate, or misleading”*.

P9 likewise emphasised teachers’ responsibility for helping students navigate abundant but potentially unreliable information: *“Among this vast amount of information, students can easily become confused about what is accurate. Teachers, therefore, need to guide them in finding and selecting reliable information and in thinking critically”*. P1 and P10 also described guiding students to question AI outputs rather than accept them uncritically. These accounts paralleled the documentary principles of responsible AI use, transparency, and human oversight.

4.2.3 Pedagogical Judgement

Participants increasingly associated professional authority with pedagogical judgement, contextual adaptation, assessment design, and ethical decision-making. P5 explained, *“Students can already ask AI for grammar explanations. What they still need from teachers is someone who understands learning, assessment, and classroom reality”*. P11 similarly stressed teachers’ knowledge of their learners and instructional purpose: *“AI knows language better than I do, but it does not know my students, my classroom, or why a particular activity works with this group”*.

P4 described responding to AI by concentrating on tasks that required personal argument, critical evaluation, and collaborative decision-making rather than competing with AI in knowledge provision or technical correction. Across the cases, professional legitimacy was, therefore, located in pedagogical judgement rather than in the possession of linguistic information.

4.2.4 Contextual Expertise

Participants argued that GenAI highlighted aspects of teaching that remained context dependent, including understanding learners, reading classroom dynamics, and balancing educational purposes. P1 illustrated this through Legal English: *“AI-generated materials still have to be selected, adapted, and contextualised because the Vietnamese legal system differs from the British and American systems”*.

P13 focused on the human and situational dimensions of teaching: *“AI may collect learning data, but it cannot read the emotions on students’ faces, create the atmosphere of a classroom, or possess detailed knowledge of that particular context”*. P3 similarly contrasted generic AI-generated exercises with teachers’ ability to adapt materials to students’ proficiency, interests, and disciplines. These accounts showed why contextual expertise remained central despite advances in AI capabilities.

4.3 Professional Reasoning in AI-Mediated Teaching (RQ3)

Across the 13 teacher-institution cases, participants described pedagogical agency, ethical responsibility, and assessment reasoning as interconnected rather than separate concerns. In the absence of explicit institutional guidance, they balanced learning objectives, academic integrity, assessment validity, and student needs when deciding where and how GenAI could be used. Three dimensions emerged (Table 8).

Table 8: Professional reasoning in AI-mediated teaching

Analytical dimension	Representative participants
Pedagogical reasoning through boundary setting	P1, P2, P4, P8, P9, P10, P13
Ethical reasoning as cognitive responsibility	P3, P5, P6, P11, P12
Assessment reasoning for validity preservation	P2, P4, P6, P7, P10, P11, P13

4.3.1 Pedagogical Reasoning Through Boundary Setting

Participants emphasised that appropriate AI use depended on learning objectives, learner development, and assessment purpose rather than blanket permission or prohibition. P11 explained, *“Rather than impose an absolute ban, I clarify the purpose of each task and then determine an appropriate level of AI use”*. P4 similarly stated, *“I don't ban AI. I decide where it helps learning and where students need to think for themselves”*.

P5 provided a task-specific example from Public Speaking: *“I allow students to use GenAI during pre-speaking to brainstorm ideas, organise their talks, or identify signposting language, but I prohibit it during the live performance to protect authentic oral production”*. P3 also distinguished between permitted and prohibited use at the start of each semester and required students to disclose AI assistance. Specifically, AI was permitted for preparation and formative support but restricted when tasks were intended to demonstrate independent competence.

4.3.2 Ethical Reasoning as Cognitive Responsibility

Participants described ethical reasoning as extending beyond plagiarism detection to include cognitive responsibility, transparency, intellectual ownership, and critical

engagement. P6 stated, *“The issue is not whether students use AI but whether they still do the thinking”*. P11 similarly explained, *“I gradually came to see academic integrity not simply as whether cheating occurred but as the honesty with which students represent their ability and learning process”*.

P4 distinguished AI assistance from intellectual replacement: *“AI may support understanding and language editing, but it must not replace students’ thinking, ideas, or academic responsibility”*.

These quotations were illustrative rather than exhaustive. P7 likewise required students to explain their working process and identify AI’s contribution instead of submitting only a final product. The participants thus treated disclosure, critical evaluation, and continued intellectual engagement as central to responsible AI use.

4.3.3 Assessment Reasoning for Validity Preservation

Participants questioned whether take-home writing could still provide credible evidence of students’ independent language ability. They responded by using drafts, process writing, oral presentations and defences, in-class writing, reflective commentary, multimodal tasks, and portfolios. P4 described this change: *“For writing tasks, I shifted from assessing only the final product to assessing the process. Students submit drafts, present their ideas in class, or explain their language choices and arguments”*.

P3 provided a more structured example: *“Students now submit a topic proposal, an annotated outline, a first draft with any AI use disclosed, peer-review feedback, a final draft with tracked changes, and a reflection on the writing process”*. P7 expressed the underlying rationale: *“The assessment has to show students’ thinking, not simply the final product.”* P2 similarly required students to submit a video explaining the ideas and personal judgements behind a written assignment. Across the seven cases listed in Table 8, assessment redesign sought additional evidence of students’ reasoning and language performance rather than relying solely on polished final products.

4.4 Policy-Practice Interaction Across Teacher-Institution Cases (RQ4)

Interview findings were integrated with documentary evidence across the 13 teacher-institution cases. Policy was treated as a context for interpretation rather than a direct determinant of practice. Table 9 shows whether teachers’ practices aligned with, extended, or compensated for institutional governance.

Table 9: Joint display of institutional governance and teacher professional reasoning across the 13 cases

Case	Institutional governance context	Teacher professional reasoning (summary)	Policy-practice interaction	Dominant dimensions
C1 (U1/P10)	Academic integrity, research governance, digital transformation. No AI-specific guidance.	Repositioned role towards facilitator; selectively integrated AI while maintaining human judgement	Extension: broad principles translated into classroom practices	Identity, Agency, Ethics
C2 (U2/P4)	AI guidance, assessment governance, academic integrity, research management.	Redesign of assessment; emphasised process evidence and responsible AI use	Alignment: institutional guidance reinforced classroom decisions	Agency, Ethics, Assessment
C3 (U3/P6)	Academic integrity, research ethics, research governance.	Framed AI use through ethical responsibility and research integrity	Extension: integrity policies expanded into pedagogical practice	Ethics, Agency
C4 (U4/P8)	Emerging AI guidance, research governance, digital transformation.	Viewed AI as learning support requiring explicit pedagogical boundaries	Alignment: emerging AI guidance informed classroom implementation	Agency, Assessment
C5 (U5/P12)	Comprehensive academic integrity, research governance, postgraduate similarity regulations.	Identity shifted towards ethical mentor and learning designer	Extension: integrity principles operationalised in teaching	Identity, Ethics, Assessment
C6 (U6/P2)	Assessment regulations, research governance, digital transformation.	Developed local classroom AI rules despite limited institutional AI guidance	Compensation: teacher judgement addressed governance gaps	Agency, Assessment
C7 (U7/P1)	Academic integrity, intellectual property, research governance.	Emphasised responsible authorship and cognitive ownership	Extension: institutional integrity translated into authorship education	Identity, Ethics

Case	Institutional governance context	Teacher professional reasoning (summary)	Policy-practice interaction	Dominant dimensions
C8 (U8/P3)	General education and research governance. No AI-specific guidance.	Adapted AI use according to course objectives and assessment purpose	Compensation: teachers developed rules, addressed the absence of AI guidance	Agency, Assessment
C9 (U9/P7)	Digital transformation, assessment and research governance.	Balanced innovation with assessment validity and fairness	Extension: digital transformation interpreted pedagogically	Agency, Assessment
C10 (U10/P9)	Quality assurance, research ethics, assessment governance.	AI viewed as pedagogical support requiring teacher oversight	Alignment: governance and teacher reasoning broadly consistent	Identity, Agency
C11 (U11/P5)	Academic integrity, plagiarism control, digital transformation, research governance.	Strong emphasis on transparency, disclosure, and responsible AI use	Alignment: institutional governance directly supported classroom practices	Ethics, Assessment
C12 (U12/P11)	General regulations on education, assessment, and research. No AI-specific institutional guidance identified.	Teacher independently developed classroom AI rules while relying on professional judgement	Compensation: professional judgement addressed policy gaps	Agency, Ethics
C13 (U13/P13)	General regulations on education, assessment, and research. No AI-specific institutional guidance identified.	Emphasised discipline, accountability, and teacher responsibility despite limited AI guidance	Compensation: classroom governance established without institutional AI policy	Identity, Agency, Ethics

Cross-case analysis identified three interaction modes. Alignment occurred when institutional guidance supported teachers' decisions; extension occurred when teachers translated broad principles into local practice; and agency occurred when they developed classroom rules in the absence of AI-specific guidance. Assessment validity and responsible AI use cut across all three modes.

4.4.1 Interaction Modes

Alignment occurred in four cases, extension in five, and compensation in four. The pattern depended less on the mere existence of policy than on its classroom relevance and operational detail. More operationally specific guidance supported alignment, whereas broad integrity and digital-transformation principles required extension. Where no operational guidance existed, teachers established their own disclosure requirements, boundaries, and assessment safeguards.

This variation was evident in the account of P3: *"My university has no official AI policy, only general guidance on academic integrity. This gives me freedom to decide how AI is used, but the lack of consistency across teachers confuses students"*. P11 similarly described having to interpret institutional expectations: *"When the university emphasised academic integrity but had no clear AI rules, I had to negotiate between controlling misconduct and meeting students' actual learning needs"*. These accounts showed that governance provided different degrees of authority and constraint, while professional reasoning supplied the contextual interpretation needed for classroom action.

4.4.2 Policy Translation

Across all cases, governance rarely prescribed detailed classroom procedures. Teachers, therefore, translated national, ministerial, and institutional expectations into rules for permitted AI use, disclosure, ethical responsibility, and assessment evidence. Their role extended beyond policy implementation because they had to determine how broad principles applied to specific learners, tasks, and courses. P3 described making AI use explicit at the course level: *"At the beginning of the semester, I explain when AI may be used, when it may not, and what students must disclose if they use it"*.

As P2 explained: *"The university encourages digital innovation, but it doesn't tell us exactly what students should or should not do with ChatGPT. Those decisions still belong to teachers"*. Similarly, P6 observed that *"Policies provide general principles. Teachers still have to decide how those principles work for particular students and particular learning tasks"*. These accounts showed that teachers functioned not simply as policy implementers but as policy translators, transforming broad governance principles into classroom expectations, pedagogical boundaries, ethical norms, and assessment practices.

5. Discussion

This study extends the research on GenAI in language education by integrating teacher interviews with multi-level policy analysis. The findings position professional reasoning as the link between evolving governance and teachers' situated decisions regarding identity, agency, ethics, and assessment.

5.1 Teacher Professional Reasoning Under Multi-Level AI Governance

The findings suggested that GenAI reshaped teacher professionalism by redefining rather than diminishing professional legitimacy. Consistent with sociocultural

perspectives on teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Clarke, 2008) and ecological agency (Priestley et al., 2015), participants located professional value in pedagogical judgement, contextual expertise, ethical guidance, and learning design. This supports conceptions of teacher AI literacy that include pedagogical, ethical, critical, and professional judgement alongside technical competence (Moorhouse et al., 2024; Prilop et al., 2025; Ruiz & Yambao, 2026).

The findings also move beyond technology adoption by showing how teachers interpret governance through decisions about learning, ethics, and assessment. National policies established strategic direction, ministerial documents translated priorities, and institutions operationalised them unevenly. Professional reasoning, therefore, mediated between broad governance expectations and classroom practice, complementing research on institutional variation and instructor discretion (An et al., 2025; Chan, 2023; Jin et al., 2025; Parker et al., 2025).

5.2 Ethical Reasoning and Assessment Validity

The findings indicated that ethical reasoning and assessment validity were intertwined. Participants prioritised cognitive responsibility, transparency, and critical engagement over detection alone. This aligns with pedagogically informed approaches to AI ethics (Cotton et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2023) and governance frameworks that connect responsible use with human oversight and critical engagement (Chan, 2023; Luo, 2024).

Assessment redesign was motivated by the need to preserve the validity of assessment evidence rather than detect AI use. Consistent with Messick's (1989) validity framework, participants adopted process-orientated, performance-based, and multimodal assessment to capture evidence of reasoning rather than rely on polished products. This supports evidence favouring assessment redesign over unreliable detection (Corbin et al., 2025; Kofinas et al., 2025) and shows how teachers responded to interacting pedagogical, ethical, and governance pressures.

5.3 The Governance-Informed I-AEAP Heuristic

The study proposes the governance-informed Identity-Agency-Ethics-Assessment Practices (I-AEAP) heuristic (Figure 2). Previous research has examined these domains separately: identity (Beijaard et al., 2004), ecological agency (Priestley et al., 2015), professional GenAI competence (Moorhouse et al., 2024), governance (Chan, 2023; Jin et al., 2025), and assessment redesign (Corbin et al., 2025; Cui et al., 2025). The I-AEAP heuristic connects the domains by locating professional reasoning in teachers' reconciliation of policy expectations, classroom evidence, ethical commitments, and assessment purposes.

Multi-level governance provides strategic, educational, and institutional expectations but does not determine practice. Within this context, identity establishes professional purpose, agency enables action, ethics provides criteria for justification, and assessment practices translate judgements into evidence-generating tasks. These

relationships are reciprocal. Assessment problems may prompt new ethical boundaries, forms of agency, or understandings of professional identity. The governance-informed I-AEAP heuristic is, therefore, an interpretive and recursive heuristic rather than a causal model.

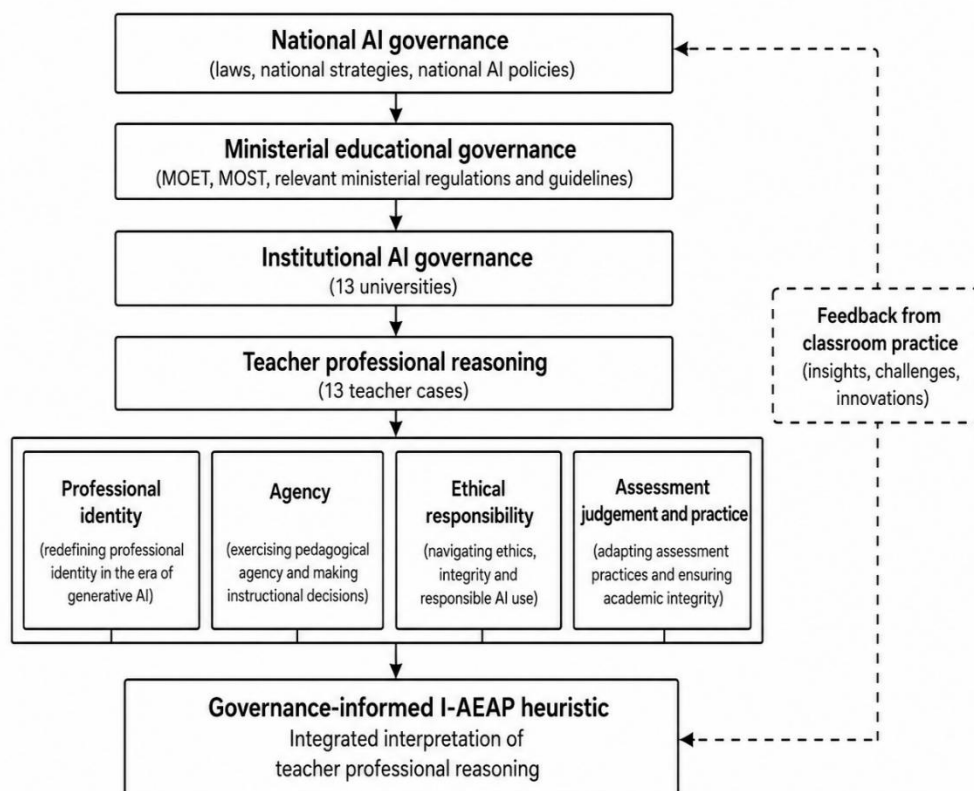


Figure 2: Governance-informed I-AEAP heuristic of teacher professional reasoning under multi-level AI governance

Note. MoET = Ministry of Education and Training; MoST = Ministry of Science and Technology; I-AEAP = Identity-Agency-Ethics-Assessment Practices

Figure 2 links the heuristic to the cross-case evidence. Identity was reflected in learning design and ethical guidance, while agency was evident in boundary setting. Ethics was expressed through transparency and cognitive responsibility and assessment practices through process-orientated and performance-based redesign. The alignment, extension, and compensation modes show how these dimensions operated under different levels of institutional guidance. The heuristic is empirically grounded in the 13 cases but remains a proposition for further research rather than a validated measurement model.

6. Conclusion

This study integrated interviews with 13 university EFL teachers and 88 policy and governance documents to examine professional reasoning under multi-level AI governance. Teachers repositioned their professional identities, exercised pedagogical agency, negotiated ethical responsibilities, and redesigned assessment in response to both governance expectations and classroom realities. Governance was, therefore, enacted through teachers' situated interpretation rather than transferred directly from policy to practice.

The study proposed the governance-informed I-AEAP heuristic to connect identity, agency, ethics, and assessment practices through professional reasoning. It also showed the value of linking teacher accounts with multi-level policy evidence. Effective governance required both institutional policy and teachers' professional judgement; professional development should, therefore, strengthen assessment literacy, ethical reasoning, policy interpretation, and reflective judgement alongside technical AI skills. The heuristic may also help institutions in identifying areas where broad policy expectations provide insufficient operational guidance.

Several limitations qualify the findings. First, the qualitative sample comprised 13 information-rich teacher cases and was designed for analytical comparison not statistical representation of Vietnamese university EFL teachers. Second, Vietnam's national and institutional context limits applicability to jurisdictions with different regulatory traditions. Third, interviews captured teachers' self-reported reasoning and practices; without classroom observation, student evidence, or assessment artefacts, the study cannot establish how consistently those accounts were enacted.

Fourth, the official institutional documents may have been incomplete, may not have captured informal faculty-level guidance, and may have differed from policy implementation in practice. Fifth, the policy corpus and GenAI technologies were bounded by the 31 March 2026 verification date while policies and GenAI technologies continue to change. The institutional configurations should, therefore, be understood as time-specific analytical descriptions.

Future research should examine governance-informed professional reasoning through longitudinal classroom observations and comparisons across disciplines, institutional cultures, and national policy environments. Such designs could test and refine the transferability of the I-AEAP heuristic.

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Appendix

Interview protocol

1. Before GenAI became widely available, how would you describe your role as a university English teacher? *Probes: Please describe your typical teaching responsibilities, areas of expertise, and how you perceived your professional role at that time.*
2. Since the emergence of GenAI, have you experienced any changes in how you perceive your professional role or expertise as an English teacher? *Probes: If so, please explain what has changed and why.*
3. Have there been moments when you felt that your professional identity as an English teacher was challenged, reshaped, or reaffirmed by AI? Can you describe a specific situation? *Probes: Please describe the context, what happened, and how you responded.*
4. In what ways, if any, has GenAI influenced how you evaluate your own professional competence in everyday English teaching practice? *Probes: Please share a specific situation in which your professional competence felt reinforced, challenged, or in need of redefinition in the presence of AI.*
5. What factors do you draw on when deciding whether, when, and how GenAI should be allowed, restricted, or regulated in your English classes? *Probes: Please describe the considerations involved and how these decisions are enacted in practice.*
6. Have you ever deliberately resisted or limited the use of AI in your teaching? What factors influenced that decision? *Probes: Please describe a specific situation that led to this decision and how you explained or implemented it in your classroom.*
7. Can you describe a specific teaching situation in which you felt particularly empowered or constrained due to AI-related expectations? *Probes: How did you respond to this situation?*
8. How have institutional policies or student expectations shaped your pedagogical decisions regarding the use of AI in English teaching? *Probes: Please share a concrete example in which you had to adjust, negotiate, or reconsider your decision due to these factors.*
9. In your English teaching practice, what ethical concerns have you encountered regarding students' use of GenAI for learning tasks? *Probes: Can you describe one or two specific situations in which you felt uncertain, conflicted, or found it difficult to make a decision?*
10. How do you currently understand the concepts of authorship and plagiarism in relation to AI-assisted English assignments? *Probes: Have these understandings changed over time? If so, what prompted the change in your perspective?*
11. Have your views on academic integrity changed since GenAI became more accessible? If so, how and why? *Probes: How have these changes influenced the way you guide or assess students?*
12. How do you balance encouraging learning and innovation with maintaining ethical boundaries in AI-supported English learning tasks? *Probes: Can you describe how you make decisions in situations where these boundaries are not clearly defined?*
13. Since the emergence of GenAI, which forms of English assessment have you found to be the most difficult to control or to be the least reliable? *Probes: What makes these forms of assessment less appropriate or effective than before?*

14. Have you modified or redesigned any assessment tasks or criteria in response to AI? Please describe what you changed and why. *Probes: Did these changes arise primarily from institutional requirements, classroom experience, or your own professional judgement?*
15. How do you attempt to ensure fairness and validity when assessing students' English proficiency in AI-mediated contexts? *Probes: Have you encountered any difficulties or tensions when trying to maintain fairness among students?*
16. Have you experienced any tensions or conflicts between institutional assessment requirements and the realities of students' AI use? *Probes: In such situations, what do you tend to prioritise and why?*
17. In your view, what new competencies are necessary for English teachers to teach effectively in AI-rich learning environments? *Probes: How do these competencies emerge from the concrete changes you have experienced in teaching or assessment practices?*
18. How do you envision the evolvement of your role as a university English teacher over the next five years? *Probes: Are there roles, responsibilities, or tasks that you believe will become more or less important than they are at present? Why?*
19. What forms of professional support or professional development do you think English teachers need in relation to GenAI? *Probes: What challenges or gaps in your current teaching practice give rise to these needs?*
20. Is there any other aspect of teaching English with GenAI that you consider important but often overlooked? *Probes: This may include issues that you have limited opportunities to discuss in formal forums or within existing policy contexts.*