



# "Transforming TESOL In the Kurdistan Region: A Strategic Framework for Advancing English Language Education and Policy Reform"

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategic management of English language programs in the Kurdistan Region, emphasizing its significance in advancing educational quality and socio-economic development. Drawing from policy analysis, curriculum design, and teaching methodologies, the research proposes an integrated strategic framework tailored to the region's unique needs. The paper explores historical shifts in English language policy, evaluates national and institutional approaches, and assesses challenges such as resource limitations, cultural dynamics, and inconsistent implementation. It also highlights innovative practices, case studies, and future policy recommendations aimed at improving TESOL outcomes. Ultimately, the study underscores the necessity of aligning English language education with broader strategic and developmental goals to foster a globally competitive academic environment in Kurdistan.

**Keywords:** TESOL, strategic education policy, English language curriculum, teacher training, Kurdistan higher education, communicative teaching methods, language program management

## 1. Introduction

The strategic management of English language programs can play a pivotal role in advancing educational development and national growth within the Kurdistan Region. "Strategic management" pertains to the process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating future-oriented decisions that enable organizations to achieve lasting competitive advantage. This strategic perspective is particularly significant in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), which has recently attracted considerable interest around the globe. There is substantial evidence that the English language serves as a medium of international communication, unwittingly promulgating Western values and practices.

The overarching research objective guiding this study is to undertake a critical investigation of the strategic management of English language programs in Kurdistan. To this end, the study proposes an integrated framework designed to encourage the adoption of a strategic multivariant approach to the design, methodology, implementation, and evaluation of associated programs. Among the expected outcomes are a set of strategic contextual recommendations and an integrated management framework tailored to the strategic management of English language programs in the Kurdistan Region for TESOL purposes. Every educational institution includes an English language program professors, teachers, and students alike.

TESOL encompasses the theory, development, and application of English as a second or foreign language within both educational contexts and everyday practice. In addition to general concepts of English linguistics and British and American literature, most TESOL sections contain a preliminary overview of linguistic principles, a history of the English language, and a brief account of language acquisition and learning. In many Arab countries, English does not immediately become an official school subject until high school. However, at the tertiary level, the demand to learn English is considerably higher because many aspects of the faculty both depend on and enhance English language proficiency.

## 2. Overview of TESOL

TESOL is an acronym for “Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages”. It represents a field of research and practice aiming to aid students whose mother tongue is not English to enhance the four essential language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Similar to other languages, teaching English involves two basic components: grammar and vocabulary. In recent decades, the teaching of English has experienced significant changes worldwide. Several approaches and methods have been introduced to replace former ones. In most cases, the adoption of these new versions has promoted better student results. Following the emergence and establishment of new approaches, educators have modified their teaching philosophies to accommodate them.

## 3. Historical Context of English Language Education in Kurdistan

The Kurdistan Region implemented a centralized ministry of education for all public schools in 2006 (Haji, 2018). Before this, the Kurdistan Regional Government managed education in the region but officially handed control of primary and secondary schools to the new ministry, which began administering these functions. The first universities in Kurdistan were public, founded before 1992, when self-rule was established (Noori Kareem, 2017).

Initially employing a curriculum largely adopted from Iraq’s educational system, Kurdish authorities revised the university curriculum to emphasize English language proficiency, responding to a mandate from the Ministry of Higher Education recognizing English as an international language of higher education. Subsequently, the Ministry of Higher Education in the Kurdistan Regional Government (MHE) required instruction of various preparation courses in English. This mandate presented significant obstacles to educators and administrators as they sought to develop English programs and began the search for qualified instructors. The establishment of a Board of Higher Education in 1992 empowered authorities to plan a higher education system that met the linguistic and academic demands of the developing autonomous region. Following guidance from several educational task forces, the Language Centre, associated with the University of Salahaddin-Erbil, was tasked with developing an English curriculum for university students, initially targeting English department students but soon required for all freshman and sophomore students across major universities in the region.

## 4. Policy Framework for TESOL in Educational Institutions

There is a comprehensive national strategy of educational reform being developed in Iraqi-Kurdistan. This strategy provides the framework for higher education policy in general, and for English language policy within the universities of the region. In turn, the universities develop internal strategies with specific management objectives designed to shape English language policy according to the requirements of their institutional missions (Haji, 2018). It is significant that the 2008 programmes and the 2009 M.A. programmes mandated English as the medium of instruction, and that Kurdistan’s commitment to expanding English Language Teaching (ELT) aligns with its widening and intensifying economic, cultural, scientific and political links. From the outset of Kurdistan’s Higher Education Policy Framework, to the ELT programme status in 2015 there was an ever-enhancing demand for English language proficiency. English language teaching across Kurdistan is a good example of such spread, with initiatives from international organisations such as the British Council and various United Nations agencies leading to widespread dissemination of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) throughout the education system.

The attainment of competence in EFL has become important across the secondary school sector, through training courses and Kabinets sponsored through resources from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies. In the south of Iraq teaching is largely restricted to the classroom, but in Kurdistan there has been a spill over into the community and some commercial activities, which has served to increase the status of English in society and the incentive for young people to invest in the acquisition of proficiency. As far as theoretical knowledge is concerned, the factors outlined above, and the national strategy of reform in Iraqi-Kurdistan, emphasise the importance the authorities attach to ELT and the development of educational policy and strategy in this field. This also accounts for the increasingly comprehensive 2008 B.A. ELT programme, and the range of public universities from Sulimani, through Dohuk and Erbil, to Koya, that currently operate a full B.A. ELT programme alongside numerous private colleges.

### 4.1. National Language Policies

In the Kurdistan region, language policy secretary Nevroz Majeed Ali (2013) has promoted Kurdish as the primary medium of instruction in universities, with English and Arabic taught as secondary languages. His intention to implement these guidelines has been challenged by rising demand from institutions and students for English medium programs (EMPs). Parallel to these directives, Kurdistan’s Higher Education Council (KRG HE) has advocated for a greater emphasis on English in university courses, highlighting the unsettled state of language policy (Huri Yaseen et al., 2016). The Ministry of Education’s curriculum development boards have sought to introduce English across all levels of the educational system. Nonetheless, many

universities continue to offer Arabic media degree programs. These conflicting policies have hindered coherent implementation, as governmental agencies devote limited attention to English language development in comparison to Arabic and Kurdish. Consequently, English has not yet achieved its intended status as a national language. The development of TESOL programs therefore emerges as a crucial mechanism for enhancing English proficiency within the region (Haji, 2018).

#### **4.2. Institutional Policies and Guidelines**

These policies and guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for English language programs in Kurdistan, determining program types, durations, entry requirements, and curriculum structure. In Iraqi Kurdistan, bridging and foundation programs precede bachelor's degrees to prepare students for academic study in English. Bridging programs typically last one academic year with three semesters, while foundation programs extend over one academic year with two semesters, both offering a maximum of 25 credit hours. Undergraduate programs span a minimum of four years plus a one-year foundation, and graduate programs require two years past completion of an undergraduate degree and a foundation year.

A range of English program options exists, including diploma courses, university preparatory year programs, bachelor's degrees, and in-service teacher training; numerous institutions provide one- and two-year diploma courses designed to enhance English proficiency. To promote quality and consistency across institutions, a set of curriculum standards addresses objectives, administration, and the structure encompassing entry requirements, duration, levels, timetable, course content, student assessment, and quality assurance, thereby facilitating cross-institutional mobility.

Alignment between national and institutional policies is maintained through careful design and implementation that consider the diverse requirements of the education system.

### **5. Curriculum Development for English Language Programs**

Curriculum development for a new English language program starts with a well-conducted needs analysis of the learners, the institution, and the local context. It defines clear, prioritized aims and objectives that guide the selection of content, learning outcomes, assessment modes, and teaching practices. The statement of belief regarding the nature of language and language learning establishes coherence among all these components and creates an overall orientation for the program (Cassidy, 2018).

#### **5.1. Needs Analysis**

Need analysis is the process of collecting information about learners' reasons and purpose of learning. Every individual has needs to learn English for various specific purposes, such as tourism, healthcare management, law and engineering. Understanding these needs enables the development of structured materials and methods that address these purposes. English language programs must also satisfy broader objectives related to academic needs, personal growth, career aspirations and civic engagement (Haji, 2018). Given that every individual has specific needs, programs should be tailored accordingly. The aim of a language program is a target that all teaching-learning activities share, providing coherence for the curriculum materials and assessment procedures. Needs analysis gives the answer to the question: what is the aim of the program? The terms 'target situation analysis' (TSA) and 'needs analysis' (NA) are often used interchangeably as they emphasize different aspects of the language analysis and learning process.

Good curriculum design requires, among other things, clear formulation of curricular policies. These policies are expressed in the form of general principles that influence decision-making in various sub-fields of curriculum work, including teaching, materials and assessment. Curriculum design is a creative activity that is often informed by educational goals and objectives and carried out, in practice, in a constant interplay with the familiar realities of a particular educational context. Any future curriculum works successfully, however, only when it clearly reflects the needs to which it is responding. Information about needs therefore constitutes a crucial input and, for that reason, needs analysis stands at the very beginning of the design process.

#### **5.2. Curriculum Design Principles**

Curriculum design within university English language programmes is extraordinarily complex and challenging. A vast body of literature exists spanning the course, syllabus, and materials levels, with the scope and scale of topics from which design principles might be extracted ranging from broad, comprehensive frameworks to narrow, specific issues. General principles can nevertheless be offered, with discussion at the course and syllabus levels. The findings and implications of extensive needs analysis feed into the curriculum, which sets the broad parameters for course and syllabus design and need therefore be considered first.

Course materials and fine details are addressed subsequently. Curriculum development principles are complementary to those discussed later concerning teaching methodologies, which articulate broad approaches that must be integrated as another dimension of any workable design framework.

Needs analysis for student-centred curriculum development is universally accepted in conjunction with sound policy formulation. Different programmes nevertheless target widely divergent groups of learners with dissimilar needs in varied contexts and environments. Universities therefore have considerable freedom with

design, and a clear rationale is required that, among other things, explains the role of language, focus of the syllabus, and selected teaching approaches.

Published principles such as those in Almarza (2006) can provide a useful point of reference. Key questions include the needs being addressed (goal/target language use; education; personal development; employment; citizenship; tourism; academic study; theoretical and cultural interests), prerequisites such as the extent of foundational exposure and access to resources, and constraints deriving from available time and manpower. Consideration must also be given to the intended roles and functions of the target language within the wider social context; the language expected of students once requirements and qualifications have been met; the choice of grammar, vocabulary, and skills to be prioritised in developing the syllabus; the extent of cultural and literary content; the best balance between teaching skills per se and the provision of a realistic communication environment in which to practise those skills; and the relative emphasis to be afforded day-to-day use and academic context respectively.

The resulting framework should steer course, syllabus, materials, and assessment procedures, specifications for instructional delivery, and labour and time requirements. What emerges at the curriculum level evolves throughout the subsequent stages of development and may appear different between initial design and final realisation.

## **6. Teaching Methodologies in TESOL**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been the dominant approach in English language programs worldwide for the last thirty years; it focuses on the authentic use of language for communication. A key component of CLT is the implementation of task-based language teaching (TBLT), which promotes language understanding through meaningful communication and task work and strongly supports strategic management. Learners must be placed in authentic contexts and situations where they can engage interactively with teachers who create ample opportunities for language practice (Noori Kareem, 2017). Given rapid changes in the ease and extent of international communication, English teachers in Kurdistan should prioritize CLT and TBLT approaches.

### **6.1. Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a central element of strategic management for English language education in Kurdistan. Curriculum design and teaching methods are based on communicative and task-based approaches that produce students with strong language communication abilities relevant to everyday use. Introducing the communicative approach is the prevalent strategy of English language reform worldwide. Its practical teaching objective is the development and delivery of a comprehensive communication process organized around the four principal language modes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The teacher's role is primarily facilitating communication between learners rather than evaluating their attainment of grammar-based language rules. For this reason, teaching methods that emphasize grammar are avoided; if grammar is taught, it is introduced after a communicative context has been established (Haji, 2018). The first step in the application of the communicative approach is a comprehensive needs analysis for both institutions and students.

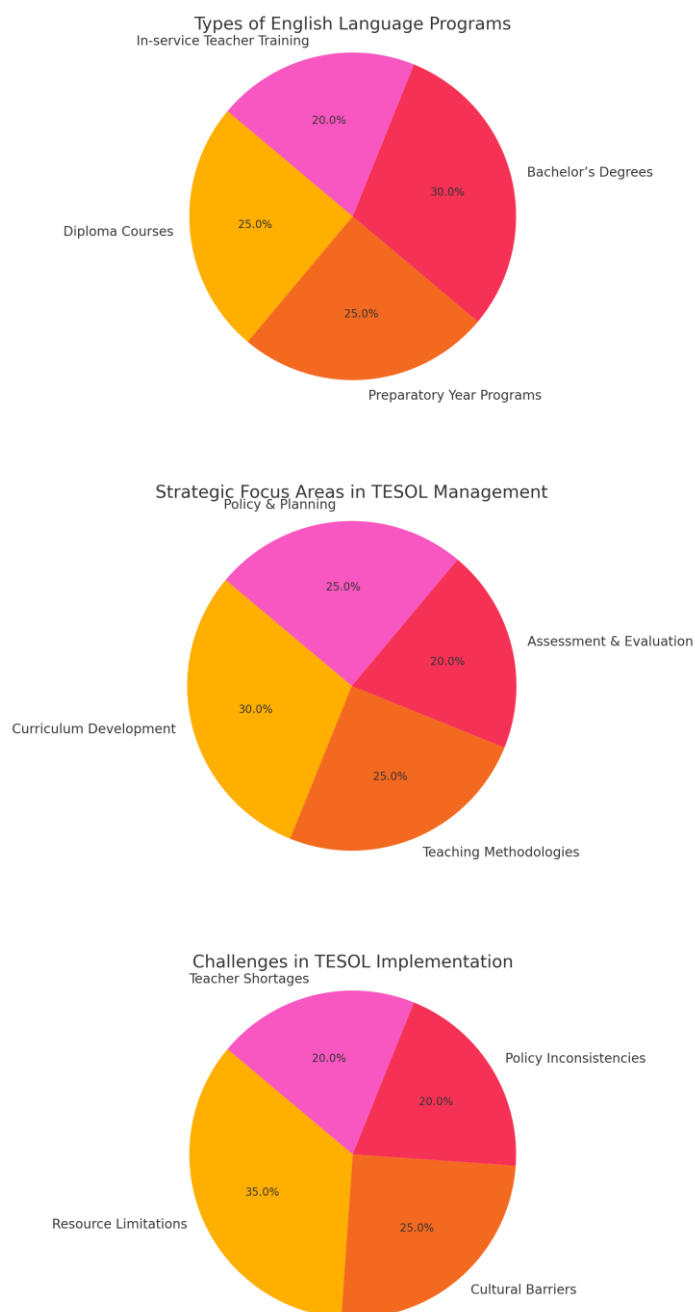
### **6.2. Task-Based Language Teaching**

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) involves the deliberate use of tasks as the fundamental planning, structuring, and sequencing devices throughout lesson preparation and delivery. As a curriculum design, TBLT is a task-centered approach in which course content consists entirely of tasks that students complete using the target language. Effective implementation of a TBLT curriculum necessitates the selection of tasks that yield meaningful feedback; the instructor must monitor performance, offer assistance if needed, and provide evaluation upon task completion. Tasks engage learners in constructing a new target language system through the process of language use in communicative activities during those tasks. This language acquisition process stems from the need to convey messages that cannot be communicated with the current linguistic repertoire, compelling the learner to develop new language forms to express the intended meaning. TBLT subsequently emerges as a system for strategically managing curriculum planning and delivery within TESOL programs. The overarching goal of the TESOL program is to better prepare learners for further education, employment, and participation in a globalized economy, using English as a language of instruction and medium of communication. The program also aims to prepare students for increased exposure to multimedia and the target language in their endeavors; it is important to recognize the program's limited duration and to integrate the rapidly changing professional environment as consistently as possible.

## **7. Assessment and Evaluation in English Language Programs**

Assessment and evaluation play a decisive role in English language programs by providing diagnostic information for improving learners' weaknesses and teaching procedures and for identifying their strengths and achievement levels. Effective assessment informs curriculum revisions, aids in teaching strategy selection, and facilitates goal attainment.

Assessment strategies generally fall into two broad categories: formative and summative. Formative assessment occurs throughout the teaching–learning process and includes techniques such as written assignments, peer evaluations, teacher observations, oral presentations, class discussions, quizzes, and drafts of projects. These activities offer frequent data that guide teachers and learners about performance levels and areas for improvement. Summative assessment takes place at the conclusion of a teaching unit to evaluate whether specific objectives have been met. It typically involves standardized tests, final exams, and comprehensive written and oral projects, providing an overall measure of achievement. Properly weighted formative and summative assessments motivate learners, identify learning needs, and furnish essential feedback on progress.



### 1. Pie Chart: Types of English Language Programs

This pie chart illustrates the distribution of various English language programs currently implemented across educational institutions in the Kurdistan Region. The largest share (30%) is occupied by **Bachelor's Degree programs**, reflecting a strong institutional focus on long-term academic development and formal qualification in English language studies. **Diploma courses** and **preparatory year programs** each account for 25%, demonstrating their vital role in bridging foundational gaps and enhancing students'



readiness for higher education. These programs are particularly important for students transitioning from non-English instruction environments, equipping them with the necessary linguistic and academic skills. Meanwhile, **in-service teacher training programs** represent 20% of the total. Although slightly lower in proportion, this category is crucial for ensuring that educators remain updated on the latest pedagogical strategies and language acquisition methods. The diversity in program types reveals a layered and adaptive approach to TESOL in Kurdistan, where efforts are made to meet learners at different stages and skill levels. The distribution also signals the need for increased investment in teacher training to strengthen program delivery and learning outcomes. Together, these programs form the backbone of English language education, contributing to the region's strategic goals of academic growth and global engagement.

## 2. Pie Chart: Strategic Focus Areas in TESOL Management

This pie chart presents the key strategic focus areas in the management of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs in the Kurdistan Region. The largest portion, **30%**, is dedicated to **curriculum development**, emphasizing the need for learner-centered and contextually responsive instructional content. Effective curriculum planning ensures alignment with student needs, institutional goals, and global language standards. **Teaching methodologies**, at **25%**, follow closely, showcasing the importance of using updated, interactive, and communicative approaches such as CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) and TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching). These methods are instrumental in enhancing student engagement and real-world language proficiency. **Assessment and evaluation**, representing **20%**, play a vital role in measuring both student progress and the effectiveness of instructional strategies. They serve as diagnostic and summative tools to refine pedagogical practices. Finally, **policy and planning**, comprising **25%**, underscore the administrative and governmental oversight needed for sustainable program implementation. Strategic policy direction, quality assurance, and teacher training frameworks all fall under this domain. This distribution highlights a balanced focus between instructional delivery and systemic management, with slight prioritization of curriculum as the foundation of TESOL success. It calls for integrated planning where pedagogy and policy mutually reinforce one another.

## 3. Pie Chart: Challenges in TESOL Implementation

This pie chart outlines the major challenges confronting the implementation of TESOL programs in the Kurdistan Region. The most significant issue, occupying **35%**, is **resource limitations**. These include insufficient funding, outdated facilities, and a shortage of teaching materials, which collectively hinder the quality and reach of English language instruction. **Cultural barriers**, at **25%**, present another critical concern. In a region where traditional norms and nationalist sentiments can sometimes conflict with Western language adoption, English is occasionally perceived as a threat to cultural identity. This perception can lead to resistance among students, teachers, and parents, affecting motivation and program effectiveness. **Policy inconsistencies**, accounting for **20%**, further complicate implementation. Conflicting directives from different educational authorities and a lack of unified national language policy can result in fragmented program structures and uneven learning outcomes. Lastly, **teacher shortages**, at **20%**, reflect both a lack of qualified instructors and limited access to continuous professional development. These shortages often translate into overloaded classrooms, diminished instruction quality, and low student performance. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts in funding, teacher training, cultural sensitivity, and policy coherence. Only then can TESOL programs be effectively integrated into Kurdistan's broader educational and developmental goals.

Testing exemplifies a commonly employed assessment form, with the potential to raise student morale and clarify strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, language programs routinely administer course-entry, achievement, oral proficiency, and exit tests. Each category has a distinct function: course-entry tests determine learners' suitability for a program; achievement tests assess progress at the end of each course; oral proficiency tests evaluate speaking skills; and exit tests certify a level of competence upon program completion.

## 7.1. Formative Assessment Strategies

Formative assessment is a dynamic process of gathering evidence about a student's learning during the instructional period, enabling the identification of areas requiring further attention (Zhang et al., 2024). It offers detailed insight into learners' strengths, weaknesses, and misconceptions, allowing for immediate feedback and adjustment of teaching methods. The benefits of formative assessment extend to students, instructors, and institutions: it shapes instructional content, encourages student autonomy through self-monitoring, enhances cognitive and metacognitive skills, and promotes reflective and critical thinking about the learning process. Students consequently develop self-efficacy, motivation, responsibility, and academic skills (Zia et al., 2019).

Effective use of formative assessment mandates that educators have a clear understanding of assessment purposes and application. Feedback plays a pivotal role, providing learners with information about their achievements, the standards they must meet, and strategies to bridge the gap between current performance and desired objectives. The assessment landscape involves activities, tasks, techniques, and tools designed to

collect evidence of learner progress and understanding. Constructive feedback enables students to recognize success criteria, identify deficiencies, and comprehend corrective measures. Consequently, formative assessment fosters motivation and the development of self-regulation, critical thinking, metacognition, and self-reflection skills (World English Journal et al., 2019).

## **7.2. Summative Assessment Approaches**

Summative assessment refers to the formal process of evaluating student learning at the conclusion of a course, unit, or period of instruction. Examples include end-of-term exams, final projects, standardized tests, or any other evaluative measure that tallies student achievement against predetermined benchmarks or objectives. Such assessments aim to quantify the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes stated at the outset of a programme or course of study. They are evaluative, high-stakes instruments intended to provide a conclusive appraisal of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Summative assessments also assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching programmes and curricula, making them crucial to both teaching and learning at macro-level.

## **8. Teacher Training and Professional Development**

While training in TESOL is important for teachers at the initial stage, in-service training remains a requisite for maintaining the quality of language programs. Teacher professional development is a necessary and continuing process that occurs before, during, and after a teacher's educational career. It is an ongoing process aimed at improving knowledge and skills as the teaching role demands. Language teachers face ever-changing contexts and new challenges, making it vital for them to engage in professional development courses and workshops to keep abreast of developments in teaching and assessment and to become aware of their own learning and teaching strategies.

In most countries in the Middle East, however, teachers have received little training, particularly in speaking and listening skills, which are often taught by untrained, non-English-speaking teachers. The absence of an accreditation and nationwide induction-by-training program for language teachers often results in teaching being confined to a few years of tertiary education with methods that have limited impact. Consequently, there is a strong demand for trained teachers of English in these countries.

### **8.1. Initial Teacher Education**

English Language Teaching (ELT) has witnessed numerous transformations over the past six decades, evolving from the dominance of the Grammar-Translation Method to the advocacy of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which encourages communicative competence in motivating language learners. Governments, ministries of education, and English language teaching and learning institutions endeavour to implement their policies and strategies carefully, taking into account available resources and anticipated challenges.

The primary concern of educational systems worldwide is producing well-educated individuals who can meet the demands and challenges of their country, currently highly influenced by globalisation, which requires competence in technology and new modes of communication.

In Kurdistan, English is growing in significance and is taught in numerous schools and universities. Most private and governmental institutions adopt specialised English Departments focusing on pure English language, while some public universities employ English as the medium of instruction for various fields. As the learning of English expands in Kurdistan, the need arises for the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to develop a policy framework guiding public universities in the region.

It is essential to recognise that the recommended framework does not apply to private universities, central government institutions, or the Educational Services Department, although some ministries and departments already possess their own language policies.

This aspiration motivates the proposed policy not only because of the region-wide position of English but also due to the extensive role and function the language now plays in development, science, and technology across multiple areas. A complete regulation promises a more balanced, integrated, and productive application. A sound language policy constitutes the first step towards achieving the desired aim. (Haji, 2018)

### **8.2. Ongoing Professional Development**

Ongoing professional development plays an essential role in the implementation of TESOL strategic management. Initial teacher education rarely equips novice teachers with the range of perspectives and skills necessary to meet the diverse demands encountered in contemporary language classrooms. In the Kurdistan region, schools must address challenges such as teacher shortages, recruitment of less-than-ideal candidates, class size fluctuations, timetabling inconsistencies, and accommodation of varying objectives and background knowledge (Haji, 2018).

In-service training and continuing professional development ideally form an integrated framework for addressing these issues. Training efforts should evolve from a rather prescriptive mode directed at standardizing novice entry to the profession, into long-term processes that facilitate the acquisition of

individual experience and expertise in an appropriate organizational context. Effective ongoing professional development includes the supportive maintenance of individual teachers' commitment, motivation, and enthusiasm for improving their performance.

## 9. Challenges in Implementing TESOL Policies

An effective steering of English-language programs in the Kurdistan Region faces a number of obstacles. Since the establishment of the KRG and development of formal English-language programmes, for example, the resources available for the implementation of TESOL policies have proved inadequate. This is partly due to the relatively limited budget available: for example, the KRG allocates 5.8% of the overall budget for education, compared to 6.6% in Saudi Arabia and 8.7% in Qatar. The shortage of resources has also been compounded by the institutional focus on maximising teaching hours, resulting in a shortage of time for activities such as curriculum development, assessment design and teacher training, which are critical for the effective implementation of TESOL policies. Moreover, although there is a widespread acknowledgement of the need for political stability in order to develop effective TESOL policies and programmes in the region, governance in the Kurdistan Region remains deeply influenced by the ruling parties, many of which have displayed a low degree of commitment to TESOL policies and programmes that advance the Kurdish mission and government objectives. In such circumstances, the KRG and even Kurdistan's private-sector actors struggle to maintain credibility. In terms of the socio-cultural dimension, English-language programmes are regarded by both teachers and students as an opportunity to gain personal advancement so that they can achieve particular goals, claim social status or seek employment (Haji, 2018). However, speaking English can still be considered a problem for teachers or students who are more supportive of Kurdish nationalism and see the Kurdish language as an oppressed language. Political instability and limited resources therefore constitute significant problems for the effective implementation or monitoring of TESOL policies within the Kurdish education system. Although such problems are serious, the KRG's greater prioritisation of education since the securing of de facto autonomy in 1991 means that Kurdish students, teachers, schools and institutions have been better served than many of their Iraqi counterparts.

### 9.1. Resource Limitations

Despite government commitment, Kurdistan's educational system continues to face challenges common to other developing countries. One frequently mentioned difficulty is the shortage of financial resources that closed many public schools and hindered the construction of new ones, limiting access to education. Kurdistan's annual education budget has been declining; in 2012, it was about 120 USD per student, down from the previous year and much lower than the 300 USD per student spent in Iran, a neighbouring country with a comparable education structure. This lack of funds is reflected in the scarcity of games, mobile laboratories, student dormitories, recreational facilities, and cultural events. Many of these shortfalls were a recurring theme throughout interviews with educational experts (Haji, 2018).

### 9.2. Cultural Barriers

Culture is a major factor affecting TESOL in Kurdistan. Cultural boundaries exist in Kurdistan that should be taken into account before deciding on any policy or program for the region (Noori Kareem, 2017). Teachers in the area tend to teach from a traditional point of view, one that relies heavily on translation. Students' parents seek to preserve their culture and then language ability to an extent, causing some confusion among students and teachers. Besides, some trainers believe that students do not have the ability to successfully learn the English language later on in their academic career. This makes cultural differences a hindrance in processing an effective policy. TESOL teachers should consider the perspectives of all students carefully whenever preparing a lesson. For example, any curricula should be flexible and take into account all local factors when designing content to suit the cultural needs of the students. English language programs must adequately plan their curricula to meet the requirements of disciplines that use the English language at various levels of education. Policymakers can play an important role in the implementation of the various approaches used when learning and adopting the English language by following strategic management through a clear analysis of TESOL requirements at the national and organisational levels. Generally, the effectiveness of strategic management increases when there is a comprehensive and clearly stated policy guiding the implementation of key TESOL issues. TESOL policymakers therefore require a significant understanding of language systems and competencies at all levels of education in the country.

## 10. Case Studies of Successful Programs

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, several governmental and non-governmental English language programs have thrived. Koya University provides a successful local example. Outside the region, the British Council English Language Teacher Training (ELTT) program has raised teacher qualifications and competence in various countries. The English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) in Egypt has improved teacher motivation, competence, and student confidence. The British Council's Kite reader scheme in Egypt has introduced contemporary literature and persevered against cultural opposition for three years. The British



Council Overseas Teacher Training and Accreditation (OTTA) program in Egypt has empowered teachers to influence colleagues and encourage peers. The Iraqi K-12 Ministry of Education's English Language Teaching Policy and Strategy offers a comprehensive strategic management framework for English language teaching in the region (Haji, 2018) (Fenyiwa Amonoo-Kuafi, 2019).

### **10.1. Innovative Practices in Kurdistan**

TESOL provision in Kurdistan constitutes a major priority for the achievement of broader educational and wider socio-economic development objectives. English is the first foreign language taught through the Kurdish education curriculum. Increasing numbers of Iraqi and non-Iraqi individuals aspire to learn the language in order to improve their professional prospects and facilitate access to higher education. Consequently, substantial attention is directed to TESOL in both state and private institutions.

Significant innovation in the sector characterizes many programs, with examples established worldwide that may provide reference points for Kurdistan. Although English language teaching in non-English speaking regions in the Middle East faces uncertainty, innovative programs exist in Iraq that may serve the Kurdistan Province.

### **10.2. Comparative Analysis with Other Regions**

During the last century, countries of the Middle East witnessed many changes and fluctuations in English teaching policies. TESOL programs in the Gulf States, Cyprus, and Turkey display similarities to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) for several reasons including cultural background, funding policies, professional training, and the influence of the oil industry on education. For example, English is taught earlier in Northern Cyprus than in the Middle East, with English being a compulsory subject from the first year of primary education. Four decades ago, the TESOL policy in the Gulf States became indistinct due to views that English might dissolve Arab and Muslim identities. However, these conservative voices reduced once the importance of English in the oil industry became apparent.

Similarly, in KRI, the government encourages and supports municipalities to open and manage English language centres and schools. Established universities in the region focus on English teaching, and TESOL programs sanctioned by the British Council receive considerable funding. Whereas some schools rely on methods developed over 30 years ago, others employ the latest teaching approaches and techniques; differences also exist among the public, private, and KRSO schools.

English has been an active foreign language in Turkey for more than half a century. Similar to mainstream policy in KRI, English is a compulsory subject starting from the fourth grade in Turkish primary schools. Teaching methodologies typically address listening, reading, writing, and speaking through exams and homework assignments.

## **11. Future Directions for TESOL in Kurdistan**

The English language has increasingly dominated global communication, intensifying demand for teachers worldwide. Consequently, many Kurdistan educational institutions have created programs to train aspiring teachers. Yet, they have developed without strategic planning and effective policy frameworks. This chapter addresses the formulation of strategic policies for these programs, outlining Kurdistan government commitment, the role of policy in management, and specific recommendations related to curriculum, student assessment, teacher extracurricular engagement, and educational authorities.

The demand for English speakers is driven by its use as a lingua franca for scientific advancement. Educator training programs must therefore be strategically designed with supportive policies that harmonize teaching practices and institutional coordination. Absent such guidance, management efficiency and institutional reputation suffer. In Kurdistan, multiple universities offering English-language instructions require aligned policies to meet both student and employment market needs. Strategic planning capable of producing qualified, market-ready graduates is thus essential.

Strategic management enables alignment of limited resources with organizational objectives. However, institutional management bodies remain too detached from Government oversight, limiting effective policy adoption. Policy formulations should therefore ensure alignment between Government directives and institutional compliance. Strategic management practice further necessitates broad statutory regulation grounded in governing policies. Such support transitions short-term operational decisions into a strategic framework that facilitates long-term goal attainment (Ameen, 2023).

Regarding curriculum development, policy alignment and clear political objectives constitute preconditions for comprehensive and effective plans. State analyses underpin formulation processes, linking desired content with sustainable delivery mechanisms. Political directives address externalities and anticipate future conditions, guiding the development of transitional curricula during policy implementation phases. Ministerial development of model programs with the flexibility for superior institutions to adapt fosters innovation and contextual responsiveness across sectors. Such provisions ensure varied sectors of employment receive appropriately attuned curricula that resonate with their specific organizational objectives.

### 11.1. Policy Recommendations

A thorough analysis of existing policies underlines the importance of comprehensively addressing the roles and responsibilities of diverse stakeholders involved in TESOL program management. Emphasizing the operating system's strategic nature, priorities should encompass controlling procedures, resources, and furnitures. This framework guides the development and implementation of English language programs, ensuring coherent and effective management aligned with institutional objectives.

The careful formulation of new policies is essential to establish a systematic operational structure and action framework for TESOL initiatives. Such policies articulate clear rules, regulations, and objectives, delineate the functions and responsibilities of key stakeholders, and set criteria for policy review and adjustment. Crafting and approving these policies should involve the central government, language organizations, and higher education authorities to foster consensus and coordinated action.

Pilot projects focused on advanced English language teaching and supervisory training can serve as validation mechanisms for proposed curricula and methodologies. By examining existing policies and central examining practices, these initiatives offer practical insights into policy effectiveness and areas for refinement, thereby underpinning continuous improvement in TESOL provision.

### 11.2. Research Implications

The findings of this research have important implications for understanding how strategic management can be applied to TESOL at both the national and institutional levels. This knowledge will enable directors and policymakers to effectively allocate resources and implement policies that meet stakeholders' needs throughout the strategic management process. Several TESOL-related research directions can also be pursued based on the literature review and case studies presented. Future investigations might examine the relationship between strategic management and other plans within English language programs in the Kurdistan region. Additionally, researchers could explore the strategic management practices of specific schools or private language centers during program execution. Finally, the roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in the strategic management of English-language programs in Kurdistan represent another valuable area of study.

## 12. Conclusion

Strategic management aligns organizational resources with a shifting external, competitive environment and presents a comprehensive, ongoing management process that permits the accomplishment of objectives. The strategic model provides a means to organize and direct an institution more effectively and efficiently and highlights the critical nature of the strategic issues facing institutions today. TESOL is defined as the general discipline related to instructional design and delivery in situations where the target language is English. The primary objective is to serve the strategic managerial needs of TESOL programs to produce the next generation of skilled, experienced managers (Abdullah, 2024).

The long history of English language learning in the Kurdistan region has shaped the current foreign language policy, where English is not taught before the fourth year of primary school and is not used as a medium of instruction. A detailed framework of national and institutional TESOL policies is reflected in 13 propositions that shape the strategic organizational environment. Adopting a needs analysis approach, a comprehensive framework for curriculum development in English language programs corresponds with the TESOL policy framework. Teaching methodologies based on communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching align with the curriculum and TESOL framework.

Assessment and evaluation policies provide both formative and summative strategies consistent with program objectives. Teacher education undergoes two stages: initial teacher education during formal studies and ongoing professional development throughout teachers' careers. Implementation of national TESOL policy in the Kurdistan region is confronted by challenges such as resource constraints, motivation issues, and cultural factors. Comparative case studies from the Kurdistan region and other countries illustrate successful patterns for strategic management of English language programs.

Strategic management of English language programs enables institutions and communities to develop relationships with global partners and to exert influence in multinational and transnational fora. Given the prominence of English in the Kurdistan region, understanding effective strategic management of TESOL in the local context is essential. The detailed policy framework and supporting policies outlined can assist both leaders and policy makers in guiding future program development and policy decisions. National policy documents and strategies offer a solid foundation for cultivating strategic-success and fulfilling Kurdistan's aspirations to become a highly educated nation (Haji, 2018).

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