

Integrating Native English-Speaking Teachers in the Saudi EFL Context: A Theoretically Grounded and Evidence-Informed Framework for Sustainable Professional Integration

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Abstract

This article presents the Saudi NESTs Immersion and Integration Program (SNIIP), a theoretically grounded, multi-phase framework designed to mitigate the intercultural, pedagogical, and institutional challenges hindering the integration and retention of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) in Saudi Arabia. NESTs frequently encounter barriers such as cultural dissonance, institutional misalignment, and inadequate induction support. Anchored in intercultural adaptation theory, situated learning, and reflective practice, SNIIP proposes a context-responsive model that fosters cultural competence, pedagogical alignment, and institutional integration. Its core components, including the Saudi Mentor Training Pathway (SMTP), a virtual pre-arrival mentoring phase, and a Well-Being and Resilience Support Framework. These components draw on empirical research, stakeholder perspectives, and established practices in teacher development and intercultural education. The framework also responds to critiques of native-speakerism by positioning NESTs and Saudi teachers as co-contributors of complementary expertise, pedagogical, cultural, and institutional expertise. As the program has not yet undergone empirical implementation, its effectiveness and scalability remain to be established through the proposed pilot evaluation. By reframing NESTs as long-term educational partners rather than temporary staff, SNIIP offers a potentially scalable, policy-aligned model for aligning international teaching expertise with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 priorities. In doing so, it supports reciprocal professional integration between NESTs and Saudi educators. The article concludes with implications for policy and practice and identifies priorities for future empirical research on international teacher integration and educational sustainability.

Keywords: Native English Teachers, intercultural adaptation, professional development, Saudi Arabia, mentoring, Localization of ELT Practices, teacher retention

1. Introduction

The recruitment of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) has been a central pillar of Saudi Arabia's educational reform since the early 2000s, reflecting the Ministry of Education's (MoE) commitment to strengthening English language instruction. Through large-scale initiatives spearheaded by the MoE, instructors from English-speaking countries have been engaged to contribute English-language expertise and opportunities for communicative interaction within Saudi EFL classrooms. Despite their linguistic expertise and pedagogical strengths, the effectiveness of many NESTs may be constrained by challenges related to adapting to Saudi Arabia's distinctive cultural norms and institutional frameworks. Such constraints may limit their instructional effectiveness and impede their full integration into the classroom environment (Abu, 2023; Hyder & Anbar, 2025).

The disparity between the anticipated benefits of NESTs and the reality of their implementation continues to pose a significant obstacle to achieving educational objectives outlined in Saudi Vision 2030. Persistent challenges include limited familiarity with local educational norms and values, misalignment between imported pedagogical approaches and national curricular expectations, and the absence of comprehensive frameworks for professional integration. These issues have been associated with teacher dissatisfaction, high attrition rates, and inconsistent student achievement. Addressing these concerns is essential for effectively leveraging international expertise to support an

education system that is globally competitive and firmly rooted in its cultural context (Al-Seghayer, 2023).

Research evidence substantiates this gap between potential and practice. Pacino and Qureshi (2021) documented high attrition among NESTs, attributing it to insufficient cultural orientation, inadequate induction processes, and limited institutional guidance. These findings highlight structural challenges in English language education in Saudi Arabia and underscore the need for a context-responsive framework aligning global pedagogical approaches with local educational priorities.

An important consideration in this discussion is the longstanding critique of native-speakerism in TESOL. Scholarship on the NEST–NNEST distinction has questioned the assumption that native English speakers are inherently more effective language teachers. This body of work has also highlighted the professional, linguistic, and institutional expertise of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). From this perspective, linguistic nativeness alone does not constitute a sufficient basis for pedagogical effectiveness, particularly when teaching requires knowledge of local curricula, learner needs, institutional expectations, and sociocultural contexts. SNIIP therefore does not conceptualize NESTs as inherently superior to Saudi or other NNEST educators. Instead, it treats the linguistic and communicative resources that NESTs may contribute as complementary to the contextual, pedagogical, and cultural expertise of Saudi teachers. The program's emphasis on reciprocal mentoring, co-teaching, and collaborative professional learning reflects this position. These structures frame NEST–NNEST interaction as a process of mutual knowledge exchange rather than a one-way transfer of expertise.

In response to these challenges, the Saudi NESTs Immersion and Integration Program (SNIIP) was developed as an evidence-informed and theoretically grounded framework for orientation and professional development. Rather than positioning NESTs as external linguistic specialists, SNIIP recognizes them as culturally responsive partners in Saudi educational reform. Through intercultural learning, collaborative professional practice, and reflective engagement, the proposed program aims to support meaningful integration within the Saudi educational context. This article examines SNIIP's theoretical foundations, design principles, and core components, highlighting its potential to strengthen English language education by aligning global pedagogical standards with local educational priorities. The program is proposed for pilot implementation, and its effectiveness remains subject to empirical evaluation.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The Saudi NESTs Immersion and Integration Program (SNIIP) is grounded in a multidimensional framework integrating intercultural adaptation theory, situated learning, reflective practice, mentorship models, and teacher well-being research. Collectively, these perspectives explain how educators develop professionally and personally while navigating unfamiliar cultural and institutional contexts. Figure 1 illustrates how these theoretical perspectives converge to inform SNIIP's proposed design and implementation. The following sections examine each foundational framework, beginning with intercultural adaptation theory.

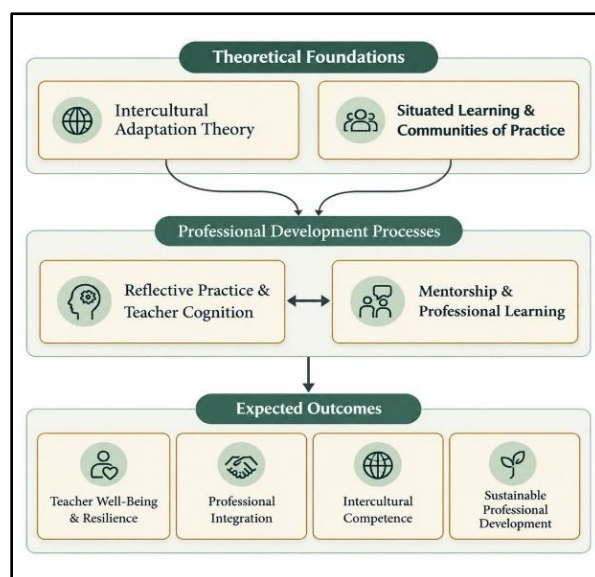


Figure 1. Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework of SNIIP

2.1 Intercultural Adaptation Theory

Kim's Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation (Kim, 2001, 2017) conceptualizes adaptation as a dynamic, dialectical process involving stress, adjustment, and growth. Through this iterative cycle, individuals develop functional competence and an intercultural identity that enables effective navigation of new cultural contexts. For NESTs entering Saudi Arabia, initial cultural dissonance is likely but may become productive with appropriate support. Consistent with Kim's framework, SNIIP incorporates cultural orientation, guided immersion in local linguistic and social practices, and community engagement activities. These elements are intended to promote authentic intercultural development. In doing so, they foster a sense of belonging and a resilient professional identity within Saudi educational institutions.

2.2 Situated Learning and Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory posits that knowledge is socially co-constructed through participation in communities of practice. For newly appointed NESTs, integration into Saudi schools entails movement from legitimate peripheral participation to fuller professional membership through collaboration with local educators. SNIIP operationalizes this framework through co-teaching, lesson planning, and reflective dialogue, enabling NESTs to develop greater familiarity with Saudi educational norms while contributing pedagogical expertise. This reciprocal process is designed to support cultural understanding, professional integration, and pedagogical innovation within Saudi classrooms.

2.3 Reflective Practice and Teacher Cognition

Schön's (1983) seminal work on reflective practice, later extended by Farrell (2019) in language education, emphasizes the role of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action in shaping teachers' professional cognition. These processes enable educators to examine assumptions, refine pedagogical practices, and develop professional identities. Within SNIIP, reflective practice is embedded through weekly journals, mentor-facilitated reflection circles, and online professional learning communities. By linking theory to classroom realities, this approach connects teaching experiences with actionable insights, supporting continuous professional growth and the development of adaptive expertise.

2.4 Mentorship and Professional Learning Models

Empirical research underscores the role of structured mentoring in teacher development and retention (Hobson et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Effective mentorship integrates instructional guidance, emotional support, and contextual knowledge, enabling educators to adapt confidently to new professional environments. Drawing on Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth, SNIIP conceptualizes mentorship as a dynamic process linking external expertise, reflection, and classroom practice. The Saudi Mentor Training Pathway (SMTP) is proposed to prepare local educators as cultural and pedagogical intermediaries, fostering reciprocal learning between NESTs and Saudi teachers. This process embeds professional growth within authentic school contexts, where cultural understanding and pedagogical expertise develop together. This reciprocal orientation is also consistent with scholarship challenging native-speakerism in TESOL, which questions the privileging of linguistic nativeness in judgments of teacher legitimacy and pedagogical expertise (Medgyes, 1992; Llurda & Calvet-Terré 2022). Recent scholarship further highlights the professional, pedagogical, and intercultural contributions of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and calls for greater recognition of expertise beyond linguistic nativeness (Yang & Forbes, 2025). Accordingly, SNIIP conceptualizes NESTs and Saudi teachers as contributing complementary forms of linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and institutional expertise.

2.5 Teacher Well-Being and Resilience

Teacher well-being is a key determinant of instructional effectiveness and long-term retention (Day & Gu, 2010). For NESTs, cross-cultural transitions may intensify stress through culture shock, social isolation, and professional ambiguity (Gu & Day, 2013). Recognizing teacher adjustment as foundational to professional success, SNIIP incorporates a well-being and resilience framework addressing emotional, social, and professional dimensions of adaptation. This framework operates through mentorship check-ins, peer-support networks, and confidential counseling resources. These mechanisms seek to foster belonging and psychological stability, which may support teachers' capacity to maintain effectiveness and resilience within unfamiliar cultural and institutional contexts.

2.6 Integrating Theory and Practice within SNIIP

By integrating mentorship-driven professional learning with evidence-informed well-being principles, SNIIP promotes NESTs' professional development and personal adaptation. Through guided reflection, collaborative

practice, and sustained mentoring within authentic school communities, the program proposes a context-responsive support framework. This framework reconceptualizes NEST integration as a reciprocal process of cultural exchange, professional collaboration, and resilience. Pilot implementation will provide evidence on its feasibility and effects within Saudi Arabia's educational landscape.

3. Program Overview and Design Rationale

This section examines the challenges of integrating NESTs into Saudi educational contexts and presents SNIIP's strategic response through a theoretical framework. It outlines the program's core objectives and design principles, establishing a cohesive structure supporting cultural adaptation, pedagogical coherence, and sustainable professional development.

3.1 Program Purpose

SNIIP is a strategic framework for integrating Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) into Saudi Arabia's EFL educational landscape. Through a sequenced approach encompassing cultural orientation, pedagogical alignment, and professional immersion, the program aims to support instructional quality and coherence across participating schools. Its mission is to foster sustainable partnerships between NESTs and Saudi English educators. This mission positions international faculty as culturally attuned, pedagogically aligned, and contextually responsive practitioners who contribute to the Kingdom's educational transformation agenda. Importantly, this rationale does not rest on the assumption that NESTs are inherently superior English teachers. Rather, the framework recognizes that NESTs may contribute linguistic and communicative resources that complement the contextual, pedagogical, and cultural expertise of Saudi English educators.

3.2 Design Principles

The design of SNIIP is grounded in three interrelated principles that ensure its theoretical and operational coherence.

3.3 Cultural Contextualization

Effective English language pedagogy in Saudi Arabia requires a nuanced understanding of local cultural values, religious traditions, and institutional frameworks.

Drawing on Kim's (2001) integrative theory, SNIIP positions cultural competence as a cornerstone of pedagogical effectiveness. This emphasis is also consistent with Sercu (2006), who highlights the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching and the evolving professional identity of language teachers. By fostering intercultural awareness among non-Saudi English teachers, the program aims to support professional integration and align English language instruction with local educational priorities.

This approach is consistent with research such as Spathopoulou and Pitychoutis (2025), which highlights the importance of intercultural competence and contextualized instructional practices in developing culturally responsive learning environments. Thus, SNIIP is designed to support NESTs' professional adaptation while aligning English language education with Saudi Arabia's sociocultural fabric.

3.4 Collaborative Professional Learning

Grounded in Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of communities of practice, SNIIP reconceptualizes professional integration as a process of situated, reciprocal learning between Saudi educators and NESTs. Through collaborative inquiry, co-constructed pedagogical knowledge, and reflective dialogue, the program shifts from unidirectional training to a dialogic, practice-based approach. This orientation also responds to critiques of native-speakerism by rejecting the assumption that linguistic nativeness constitutes pedagogical superiority and by recognizing Saudi teachers as holders of essential contextual and professional expertise. NESTs may contribute linguistic and communicative resources, alternative pedagogical perspectives, and experiences from other educational contexts, while Saudi teachers contribute locally situated knowledge of learners, curricula, institutional expectations, and sociocultural practices. In practice, this fosters epistemic collaboration, enrich instruction, and build mutual respect across cultural and linguistic boundaries. In this sense, NEST–NNEST collaboration is framed as reciprocal knowledge exchange rather than a one-way transfer of expertise.

3.5 Sustainability

To ensure long-term impact, SNIIP incorporates a sustainability framework anchored in the Saudi Mentor Training Pathway (SMTP), a train-the-trainer initiative for developing Saudi educators as school-based mentors. By institutionalizing mentoring capacity, SMTP could support the sustainability of SNIIP beyond individual NEST tenures, strengthen the systemic integration of intercultural competence and pedagogical innovation, and contribute

to longer-term educational development across Saudi Arabia.

3.6 Program Structure

SNIIP operationalizes its design principles through a structured eight-phase model that provides NESTs with an evidence-informed, theoretically grounded pathway from pre-arrival preparation to full professional integration (see Figure 2). The model addresses cultural, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions, providing a framework for effective adaptation and sustained professional development.

3.6.1 The Eight-Phase Integration Model

1. **Pre-Arrival Preparation.** Online orientation modules and early engagement with assigned mentors introduce NESTs to Saudi educational and cultural contexts. This preparation offers pre-arrival support for navigating challenges associated with international transitions.
2. **In-Country Orientation.** An intensive induction program is designed to immerse NESTs in local cultural norms, institutional protocols, and operational procedures. This program lays the foundation for effective classroom practice and smooth professional integration.
3. **Pedagogical Alignment.** Collaborative workshops and mentoring support align NESTs' instructional strategies with Saudi curricular standards and assessment frameworks. This phase is structured to foster pedagogical coherence and strengthen instructional quality.
4. **Mentorship and Co-Teaching.** The structured collaboration with certified Saudi mentors, facilitated by the SMTP, promotes co-teaching, peer learning, and contextually tailored professional development adapted to specific school contexts.
5. **Community and Cultural Immersion.** Facilitated participation in cultural, social, and professional activities deepens NESTs' cultural fluency and sense of belonging. Such activities might include workshops, local school events, and community engagement projects, all of which aim to enhance practical cultural understanding.
6. **Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning.** Ongoing reflection through professional journals, peer discussions, and digital learning communities encourages adaptive expertise and fosters lifelong learning.
7. **Administrative and Support Systems.** Institutional mechanisms prioritize teacher well-being, inclusion, and retention. These structures provide practical support, including access to counseling, regular check-ins, and clear communication channels throughout the integration process.
8. **Continuous Program Evaluation.** Systematic review and iterative refinement of program components ensure alignment with evolving educational needs and the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. This evaluation process incorporates feedback from NESTs, Saudi colleagues, and institutional stakeholders, creating a responsive feedback loop that informs program improvement.

Collectively, these eight phases represent a holistic developmental trajectory integrating intercultural competence, collaborative professionalism, and institutional sustainability. Embedding these principles, SNIIP is structured to provide a potentially scalable and replicable framework for sustained teacher development. This approach is aligned with the transformative objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 and offers a pathway toward longer-term educational development across the national school system.



Figure 2. SNIIP Eight-Phase Program Structure

4. Phase 0: Pilot Implementation

4.1 Overview

Before nationwide implementation, SNIIP is proposed to undergo a year-long pilot in three diverse education regions (urban, rural, and gender-segregated). This phase encompasses systematic evaluation of the program in authentic settings, with attention to its cultural responsiveness and operational feasibility. The pilot will generate context-sensitive evidence to refine and guide an adaptive, effective national rollout.

4.2 Objectives

The SNIIP pilot pursues four interrelated objectives geared toward ensuring contextual relevance, operational feasibility, and cultural alignment. First, it assesses the clarity, practicality, and cultural appropriateness of training modules relative to Saudi educational norms and teachers' professional contexts. Second, it examines early indicators of NEST adaptation, job satisfaction, and well-being across psychosocial and professional dimensions of cross-cultural transitions. Third, it identifies institutional barriers, including administrative constraints, operational challenges, and resource disparities, that could affect scalability and effectiveness during national implementation. Fourth, it gathers stakeholder feedback from NESTs, Saudi mentors, and school administrators to inform evidence-informed refinements in program design and delivery. Collectively, these objectives position the pilot as a planned mechanism for generating evidence to optimize SNIIP prior to nationwide rollout.

4.3 Evaluation Design

The pilot uses a mixed-methods evaluation framework, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess program effectiveness across multiple dimensions. Data collection employs a triangulated design, including pre- and post-intervention surveys, classroom observations, and stakeholder focus-group interviews. Grounded in design-based research principles (McKenney & Reeves, 2018), the evaluation prioritizes iterative refinement and evidence-informed adaptation. Findings will be analyzed at the end of each pilot semester to inform targeted enhancements to the program's conceptual and operational framework. This cyclical process ensures that national implementation is contextually responsive, resource-efficient, and empirically grounded.

5. Phase 1: Pre-Arrival Preparation (Online, Two to Four Weeks)

5.1 Overview

The pre-arrival phase is a critical stage of anticipatory socialization (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985), where newly appointed NESTs develop perceptions and understandings of their future professional roles. Through informational and relational support, this phase aims to reduce culture shock, clarify misconceptions, and foster a grounded understanding of Saudi educational and sociocultural contexts. Delivered online, the program builds foundational

knowledge and initiates professional networks to ensure a smooth transition to on-site engagement.

5.2 Core Components

This phase integrates learning and orientation activities to ease NESTs' cultural and professional transition. Interactive e-learning modules cover Saudi cultural heritage, educational philosophy, and local teacher-student dynamics, while an orientation handbook clarifies workplace norms, communication practices, and professional conduct. These resources are complemented by video briefings from current NESTs and Saudi instructors, offering authentic perspectives on pedagogical practices and everyday life. The phase concludes with virtual mentorship, connecting incoming NESTs with experienced peers to build early support networks before arrival.

5.3 Deliverables

Engagement with these core components culminates in deliverables that consolidate learning and track developmental progress. Participants complete a reflective journal documenting their evolving understanding of the Saudi sociocultural and educational context and identifying areas for continued professional growth. Successful completion would lead to a program certificate verifying participation in the pre-arrival curriculum. A mentor-introduction report summarizes initial virtual interactions, demonstrating early relationship development and highlighting areas for further support before relocation.

5.4 Expected Outcomes

Upon completing the pre-arrival phase, participants develop intercultural competence, realistic professional expectations, and a foundational understanding of the Saudi education system as key elements of professional readiness. Structured mentorship seeks to help build relational trust, supporting smoother social and professional integration. Together, these preparatory interventions are crafted to help NESTs enter the in-country orientation phase with greater confidence, stronger self-awareness, and a clearer understanding of the cultural and institutional contexts in which they will work.

6. Phase 2: In-Country Orientation (Two Weeks)

6.1 Overview

This immersive two-week orientation program serves to equip NESTs with a deep, experiential understanding of Saudi Arabia's educational and cultural landscapes.

Acting as a bridge between pre-arrival preparation and classroom practice, it aims to facilitate smooth integration through school immersion, professional development, and cultural engagement. Guided observations, hands-on experiences, and tailored skill-building activities provide NESTs with opportunities to refine their instructional expertise while developing the cultural fluency and adaptability essential for effective practice. By the program's end, participants will enter their teaching assignments with a foundation of confidence, contextual awareness, and pedagogical readiness, positioning them for a purposeful transition into their professional roles.

6.2 Core Activities and Linked Outcomes

Throughout this phase, participants engage in a carefully sequenced progression of experiences that integrate cultural understanding with applied pedagogical practice. The orientation is structured as a full-time, intensive program, running approximately from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM each day. Evenings are kept free to allow participants to acclimatize to their new environment and start building informal social connections, thereby supporting their professional and sociocultural adjustment.

Week 1: Cultural Foundation and System-Level Briefings. The orientation begins with interactive workshops led by cultural liaison officers, experienced Saudi educators, and intercultural trainers from the MoE. These sessions introduce NESTs to Saudi customs, Islamic values, and their manifestation within school environments, establishing the foundation for subsequent learning. MoE advisors and school leaders then provide system-level briefings on key educational policies, including Saudization objectives, the national English curriculum, and governance structures that shape professional practice.

Week 2: School Observations and Targeted Pedagogy. Following their initial training, NESTs undertake guided visits to a carefully selected range of model schools representing the diversity of the Saudi educational landscape. These include public and private institutions serving boys and girls across elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels in both urban and suburban areas. During these visits, NESTs observe classroom routines, student-teacher interactions, and institutional norms firsthand. This process translates theoretical discussions into practical, classroom-relevant insights that inform the next phase of targeted skill-development workshops. Led by senior NEST

mentors and experienced master teachers working in Saudi schools, these workshops focus on classroom management, culturally responsive communication, and student engagement strategies tailored to the local educational context. Professional learning therefore remains contextually grounded rather than generic. The phase concludes with structured community-building activities, including welcome events and mentor introductions, designed to foster early professional networks and social connections. Through these engagements, participants have opportunities to deepen their integration into the educational community, with potential benefits for their sense of belonging, confidence, and emerging professional identity.

6.3 Logistics and Support

To ensure a focused orientation experience, all logistical arrangements are centrally coordinated. NESTs are housed together in furnished accommodation to promote community building and peer support. Group transportation is provided to training venues and model schools, enabling participants to fully engage in program activities. Each NEST is also assigned a program coordinator who serves as the primary point of contact throughout the two-week period, offering support with logistical, professional, and cultural adjustment needs.

6.4 Deliverables

Participants complete a readiness checklist assessing their understanding of local educational policies, curriculum requirements, behavior management practices, and cultural norms, serving as both a reflective self-assessment and an indicator of overall preparedness. NESTs also engage in a facilitated reflection session led by cultural liaison officers, where they discuss insights from workshops and school visits, explore emerging challenges, and compare pre-arrival perceptions with lived experiences. This process supports the development of instructional confidence, cultural awareness, and adaptability, helping translate acquired knowledge into practical readiness.

6.5 Expected Outcomes

By the conclusion of the in-country orientation, NESTs should demonstrate a contextually grounded understanding of Saudi Arabia's educational environment, having transitioned from theoretical pre-arrival knowledge to an applied, experience-informed perspective. Through observation, reflection, and targeted skill development, participants gain greater familiarity with classroom management and communication while deepening their grasp of how national policies, curriculum frameworks, and institutional norms shape daily school practice.

NESTs also build meaningful professional and social connections with mentors, colleagues, and administrators, fostering belonging and supporting long-term adjustment.

These are proposed indicators of the transition from orientation to operational readiness, with the potential to support NESTs as they enter their school placements with greater confidence, cultural fluency, and institutional competence.

7. Phase 3: Pedagogical Alignment (One Semester)

7.1 Overview

This semester-long phase supports NESTs in making a structured transition by recalibrating their pedagogical approaches for effective practice within Saudi Arabia's EFL system. Building on their foundational preparation, participants critically and adaptively apply communicative language teaching (CLT) principles in alignment with national curriculum requirements and school-level priorities.

Rather than emphasizing abstract methodologies, the phase prioritizes collaborative, practice-embedded professional learning. Through sustained partnerships with Saudi mentor teachers and authentic classroom experiences, NESTs refine their instructional decision-making while progressing through a scaffolded continuum of analyzing curricular demands, exploring and implementing instructional strategies, and refining practice. This development is supported by cycles of co-planning, peer observation, feedback, and reflection. By the phase's end, NESTs will have engaged with the pedagogical foundations needed to deliver contextually responsive EFL instruction aligned with the Saudi educational context and students' learning needs.

7.2 Activities and Structure

The phase adopts a blended model combining monthly workshops with structured weekly in-school collaboration, including mentoring and co-planning sessions organized to ensure sustained professional engagement. Monthly workshops provide the conceptual foundation for classroom practice. In the first month, NESTs and Ministry of Education advisors analyze the English curriculum's scope, sequence, objectives, and CLT alignment. The second month focuses on assessment literacy, interpreting high-stakes examinations, designing formative assessments, and navigating local grading systems. The third month features sessions co-led by experienced NEST mentors and Saudi

teachers, addressing context-specific challenges such as managing large classes, engaging students in gender-segregated environments, and balancing CLT principles with local learning preferences.

Workshop learning is reinforced through weekly school-based collaboration, where each NEST works with a trained Saudi mentor teacher in structured co-planning sessions to develop curriculum-aligned, culturally responsive lessons. Reciprocal classroom observations and evidence-informed debriefings promote reflective analysis and instructional refinement, enabling NESTs to move from curriculum understanding to context-responsive practice through mentorship and ongoing inquiry.

7.3 Pedagogical Outcomes

By the end of the semester, NESTs will be evaluated on integrated pedagogical competencies developed through sustained engagement with the Saudi educational context, including their ability to align lesson planning, classroom practice, and assessment with national curriculum objectives. Through ongoing collaboration with Saudi mentors, they may develop greater flexibility in adapting teaching approaches to students' diverse needs, motivations, and learning preferences. Cycles of co-planning, observation, and feedback facilitate the development of hybrid pedagogical approaches that integrate CLT principles with the structural and cultural realities of Saudi classrooms, equipping NESTs to deliver contextually responsive teaching that can subsequently be evaluated for its effects on student learning outcomes.

8. Phase 4: Mentorship and Co-Teaching

8.1 Overview

Mentorship constitutes the pedagogical cornerstone of SNIIP, establishing a structured model of reciprocal professional learning between NESTs and certified Saudi mentors. Rather than replicating traditional supervisory hierarchies, the framework conceptualizes mentorship as a dialogic, co-constructive process promoting collaborative capacity-building. Through sustained partnerships, mentors and NESTs engage in shared problem-solving, pedagogical inquiry, and knowledge exchange, drawing on situated learning, professional learning communities, and reflective practice. This process positions both as co-constructors of professional knowledge.

Building on Phase 3's adaptation-focused support, Phase 4 advances mentorship into a collaborative professional partnership. The emphasis shifts from individual adjustment to reciprocal inquiry and shared knowledge creation, with the proposed model aiming to foster professional growth for both NESTs and mentors while strengthening school-level capacity.

Central to this architecture is the Saudi Mentor Training Pathway (SMTP), a professionalization framework that institutionalizes mentoring within Saudi Arabia's education system. Beyond a training initiative, SMTP equips mentors with the pedagogical, interpersonal, and facilitation competencies needed to foster reciprocal professional learning, transforming mentorship from an informal support role into a strategic mechanism for professional development and instructional improvement.

Where formally adopted, SMTP mentors could receive formal recognition through stipends, reduced teaching loads, and leadership opportunities within the Ministry of Education.

8.2 Saudi Mentor Training Pathway

Building on SMTP competencies, the mentorship relationship evolves into a collaborative partnership grounded in reciprocal learning. Both participants are repositioned as co-learners: NESTs contribute communicative methodologies and fresh perspectives, while mentors provide contextual expertise and insight into school-wide expectations.

The partnership is enacted through interconnected practices, including biweekly co-planning sessions documented in shared reflective logs. These dialogic spaces enable participants to examine pedagogical challenges, reflect on professional growth, and collaboratively design instructional units aligning curriculum standards with communicative tasks grounded in students' lived experiences.

These plans inform rotational co-teaching across grade levels, exposing both participants to diverse classroom contexts. Through parallel, team, and rotational models, NESTs and mentors contribute complementary expertise, merging contextual knowledge with communicative pedagogy. This fosters reciprocal professional learning through observation, dialogic inquiry, and formative feedback. Consistent with Hobson et al. (2009), mentoring is conceptualized as evidence-informed pedagogical dialogue rather than evaluative supervision.

The partnership extends to collaborative resource development, culturally relevant activities, formative assessment tools, and differentiated materials shared across departments, strengthening instructional capacity beyond individual

classrooms. Guided by Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence, mentors challenge cultural assumptions, mediate cross-cultural tensions, and cultivate the relational trust essential for effective transnational partnerships.

Monthly mentor reflection seminars consolidate these efforts through communities of practice, where certified mentors exchange expertise, refine strategies, and address shared challenges through collaborative inquiry. These discussions strengthen mentors' use of dialogic questioning to support NESTs' professional learning and classroom practice.

Collectively, these activities embed mentorship within a sustained framework of professional inquiry, with the proposed model aiming to transform mentorship from a support mechanism into reciprocal learning that builds individual and institutional capacity. Mentoring quality will be assessed during implementation through biannual surveys and focus groups, and an annual recognition program could be used to reinforce exemplary practice.

8.3 Outcomes

Upon completion of this phase, SNIIP establishes a pathway toward a sustainable in-country base of professional expertise through an expanded cadre of certified Saudi mentors, supporting a gradual transition from externally supported implementation to locally sustained professional infrastructure. Through rotational co-teaching and collaborative planning, the mentorship framework creates opportunities for reciprocal learning, with potential benefits for the pedagogical, intercultural, and reflective capacities of both NESTs and Saudi teachers. For NESTs, the phase supports deeper professional integration and peer-oriented mentoring relationships; for mentors, SMTP certification creates opportunities for leadership development, pedagogical learning, and professional advancement.

Moreover, the sustained emphasis on collaborative practice creates opportunities to reduce professional isolation and strengthen school cultures characterized by collective responsibility and shared instructional inquiry. Through resource development, co-teaching reflection, and professional dialogue, the model could contribute to an organizational learning environment in which expertise is distributed, continuously refined, and socially constructed. These practices can help establish durable collegial networks and embed collaborative inquiry into routine professional activity.

9. Phase 5: Community and Cultural Immersion

9.1 Overview

Extending beyond the professional sphere, this stage centers the lived and relational dimensions of intercultural adaptation. These dimensions are foundational to the progressive reconstruction of personal and professional identities (Kim, 2001). Cultural immersion is positioned not as supplementary but as a foundational learning process through which NESTs can develop greater familiarity with social norms, negotiate cultural expectations, and critically engage with the values shaping Saudi educational contexts. In practice, this means moving beyond classroom walls to build relationships, navigate daily life, and develop the cultural understanding needed to support personal well-being and professional effectiveness. Immersion in the quotidian rhythms of the host society may contribute to the affective, cognitive, and experiential processes involved in sustained adaptation and holistic well-being.

This phase runs concurrently with Phases 3 and 4 across the entire first academic year. Cultural immersion is not a discrete event, but an ongoing process integrated alongside pedagogical development and mentorship. Participation in structured activities is mandatory and embedded in the professional calendar, scheduled across work days, weekends, and school holidays.

9.2 Core Activities

To achieve these aims, SNIIP employs structured programming and immersive engagement geared toward building intercultural competence. Guided visits to heritage sites, museums, and national festivals provide interpretive entry points into the historical and sociocultural foundations of Saudi society, transforming abstract knowledge into lived understanding. For example, visits to Diriyah Gate enable mentors to contextualize key historical developments while facilitating dialogue on governance, religion, and national identity.

Complementing these encounters, school-community initiatives, English fairs, parent workshops, and cultural exchange days reposition NESTs from external service providers into relational actors embedded within local networks. During co-facilitated parent workshops, mentors translate and contextualize pedagogical terminology in real time, enabling reciprocal dialogue where parents express their views on homework, discipline, and language use while NESTs explain communicative teaching approaches. These exchanges create opportunities for dialogic

interaction in which educators and families collaboratively negotiate cultural expectations and build shared understanding.

Concurrently, introductory Arabic language instruction offers a structured means of strengthening communicative agency in everyday contexts, signaling cultural humility while potentially reinforcing self-efficacy and social belonging.

Weekly sessions focus on practical exchanges, greetings, marketplace interactions, classroom directives, and collegial etiquette, with NESTs encouraged to apply newly acquired phrases in staff-room and community interactions, often receiving informal feedback from their mentors.

Viewed collectively, these interlocking components are designed to support cultural integration as an active, relational, and developmental process, incorporating historical consciousness, linguistic competence, and community participation into a coherent trajectory of sustained adaptation.

9.3 Expected Outcomes

The cumulative impact of sustained engagement centers on the development of intercultural understanding, durable interpersonal relationships, and a strengthened sense of belonging. By year's end, participants may demonstrate increased independence, basic Arabic use in school and community settings, sustained social relationships, and a more nuanced understanding of the cultural context shaped through lived experience.

This reflexive growth may contribute to professional efficacy, as educators draw upon contextual knowledge to adapt instruction, communicate more effectively with families, and collaborate more fluidly with Saudi colleagues. These developments will be examined through mentor feedback, reflective surveys, and a culminating integration portfolio. The extent to which these intended outcomes are achieved will be determined through the planned pilot evaluation.

10. Phase 6: Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning

10.1 Overview

Reflective engagement serves as the metacognitive core of SNIIP, transforming lived experience into enduring professional knowledge and sustained growth (Farrell, 2019; Schön, 1983). Through systematic reflection, NESTs critically examine their experiential and intercultural learning, deepening awareness of pedagogical decision-making, challenging implicit cultural assumptions, and refining adaptive practice within the Saudi educational context. By rendering experience open to critical examination, reflective engagement integrates professional growth into ongoing practice and identity development.

10.2 Core Components

To support sustained professional growth, SNIIP's reflective dimension is enacted through three interrelated mechanisms. First, weekly reflective journals provide structured spaces for guided introspection, enabling NESTs to critically examine pedagogical decisions, intercultural encounters, and personal well-being. Reflecting on experiences such as student responses to group work or differing expectations of teacher authority may deepen contextual awareness and adaptive capacity.

Second, monthly reflection circles, facilitated within small peer cohorts, use structured frameworks such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to support collaborative inquiry into shared challenges and successes. These sessions position reflection as a dialogic process, enabling participants to examine intercultural experiences, reconsider interpretations, and develop more nuanced understandings of classroom interactions.

Finally, a secure online professional learning community, hosted through platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Slack, sustains continuous engagement through knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and peer support. Collectively, these mechanisms serve to embed reflection within individual and collective practice, promoting continuity, accountability, and collaborative learning across teaching cohorts.

10.3 Expected Outcomes

By the conclusion of this phase, participants will be evaluated for critical reflection, particularly their ability to systematically examine instructional decisions and navigate intercultural interactions with greater intentionality. Reflective journals and professional learning community (PLC) contributions serve as proposed indicators of developing pedagogical adaptability and intercultural competence, including documented adjustments to lesson pacing, classroom management, and feedback practices in response to student needs.

At the programmatic level, reflective artifacts, journal entries, peer discussions, and documented classroom challenges are reviewed to inform revisions to workshop content and mentoring approaches. By identifying emerging

themes and adaptation strategies, facilitators will refine program activities in response to participants' lived experiences. Through this cycle of reflection and adjustment, SNIIP aims to cultivate a culture of inquiry in which reflection evolves from a structured activity into an enduring professional stance.

11. Phase 7: Administrative and Support Systems

11.1 Overview

Phase 7 institutionalizes the structural and affective supports required to sustain teacher effectiveness and well-being over time. Recognizing that long-term success depends on both NEST competencies and the coherence of surrounding systems, this phase formalizes administrative expectations, promotes aligned leadership practices, and embeds integrated well-being structures, positioning institutional accountability as central to the proposed program's long-term sustainability.

11.2 Institutional Support Structures

At the institutional level, SNIIP establishes clearly defined professional roles for NESTs through job descriptions articulating expectations, collaborative responsibilities, and opportunities for professional initiative. Complementing this, leadership orientation sessions equip administrators and supervisors with an understanding of SNIIP's objectives, anticipated adaptation challenges, and strategies for culturally responsive support.

These provisions are reinforced by quarterly consultative meetings and anonymous digital feedback platforms, allowing NESTs to voice concerns, share insights, and contribute to school improvement. Collectively, these mechanisms create a foundation for transparency, shared accountability, and dialogue between NESTs and school leadership, with the potential to strengthen professional belonging, psychological safety, and long-term well-being.

11.3 Well-Being and Resilience Support Framework

Building on these institutional foundations, SNIIP integrates a Well-Being and Resilience Support Framework (WRSF) (Day & Gu, 2010; Gu & Day, 2013) to address the emotional and psychological complexities of cross-cultural professional transition. Grounded in the view that teacher effectiveness depends on professional agency, relational support, and emotional resilience, the WRSF extends SNIIP beyond technical preparation by foregrounding the affective dimensions of NEST adaptation. Through peer networks, resilience-oriented professional learning, and confidential counselling, the framework creates avenues for addressing professional isolation, strengthening belonging, and sustaining engagement within the Saudi educational context.

To ensure proactive oversight, SNIIP administers each semester well-being pulse checks and anonymous climate surveys, mechanisms of institutional listening rather than evaluation, to monitor morale, identify emerging stressors, and ensure teacher perspectives inform leadership decisions. Through this integration of structural clarity and emotional support, SNIIP aims to support a sustainable model of professional well-being.

11.4 Expected Outcome

Through the alignment of administrative clarity and well-being support, this phase creates a foundation for a stable and professionally supported NEST workforce. The potential benefits, including enhanced retention, intercultural competence, and morale, will be evaluated rather than assumed. By embedding these supports within institutional practices, SNIIP establishes a framework for systemic sustainability, with its effectiveness to be established through empirical evaluation.

12. Program Management and Partnership Roles

SNIIP's collaborative governance model distributes responsibilities among national, academic, and international partners to ensure accountability, coherence, and local ownership. Table 1 delineates this structure by identifying key stakeholders and their core responsibilities in proposed program implementation. These responsibilities are operationalized through well-defined coordination roles that translate governance into day-to-day practice, maintaining alignment with national policy priorities while fostering collaboration across partner institutions.

Table 1. SNIIP Governance Structure and Stakeholder Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Key Responsibilities
Ministry of Education	Provides strategic oversight, integrates policy, allocates funding, and coordinates the proposed national rollout.
Saudi Universities	Delivery of the SMTP; applied research and program evaluation.
International Partners (e.g., British Council)	Provides technical support in intercultural training, quality assurance, and relevant international practices. Uses benchmarked NEST recruitment standards (e.g., CEFR, Cambridge CELTA) to ensure candidate quality. Conducts biannual program reviews and recommends evidence-informed improvements to training and delivery.
Schools and Administrators	Manages local mentoring partnerships, daily logistics, and on-site evaluations. Embeds weekly co-planning in teacher schedules, formalizing mentorship as a core professional responsibility. Submits termly data on co-planning, observation cycles, and NEST participation in school-community initiatives to regional coordinators.

This distributed governance model shares strategic responsibilities across stakeholders while ensuring coherent implementation across institutional contexts. To operationalize this structure, SNIIP formalizes coordination roles connecting national planning with localized implementation.

A National Program Coordinator, situated within the MoE, safeguards vertical alignment by linking national policy directives with regional authorities, universities, and international partners. Through oversight of implementation data and regular reporting, the coordinator would help ensure that program delivery remains aligned with national priorities.

At the regional level, Cultural Liaison Officers and Pedagogical Trainers ensure coherence by adapting national guidelines to local contexts and facilitating communication among schools, universities, and program stakeholders. Cultural Liaison Officers support mentoring partnerships and address cultural and operational challenges, while Pedagogical Trainers provide classroom-based feedback and professional development. Ongoing data-sharing promotes continuous refinement through reciprocal exchange of insights and guidance.

Collectively, these roles translate national directives into local practice while facilitating the upward flow of feedback and evidence from schools and universities. This reciprocal exchange reinforces coherence across implementation levels and enhances the program's capacity to balance national consistency with contextual responsiveness.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation

SNIIP is supported by a mixed-methods monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework promoting accountability, continuous improvement, and evidence-informed decision-making. Integrating quantitative and qualitative indicators, the framework assesses teacher development, institutional effectiveness, and student outcomes, guiding refinement from pilot to potential national scale. Table 2 presents the balanced scorecard structuring this proposed evaluation across school, regional, and national levels.

The indicators are structured around an explicit theory of change, positioning high-quality mentor collaboration as a proposed mechanism influencing NEST pedagogical effectiveness and, potentially, student outcomes. NEST satisfaction and well-being are hypothesized to influence collaboration quality and retention, while school-level implementation fidelity is treated as a potential condition for achieving these outcomes. Mentor certification and program feedback act as leading indicators of institutional capacity and sustainability. These relationships will be examined empirically during implementation, enabling the evaluation model to evolve in response to evidence.

Table 2. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the SNIIP Program

Indicator	Definition	Data Source	Frequency
NEST Satisfaction & Well-Being	Measures job satisfaction (role clarity, fulfillment), cultural adjustment (sense of belonging, acculturation challenges), and mental health (stress, burnout, social support).	Quarterly online surveys (JDI, CDS, WHO-5); semi-structured interviews with 20% of the cohort each term.	Quarterly
Quality of Mentor Collaboration	Assesses mentor-NEST partnerships: co-planning frequency, depth of reflective dialogue, reciprocal learning, and relational trust.	Bi-monthly classroom observations using SMTP Observation Rubric; mentor/NEST reflective logs; brief partnership surveys.	Bi-monthly
Teacher Retention Rate	Percentage of NESTs completing full contractual commitment (2 years), disaggregated by reason for departure.	Ministry HR records, school personnel data; exit interviews with departing NESTs.	Annually
Student Learning Outcomes	Student English proficiency gains measured against CEFR benchmarks and aligned with the national curriculum.	Termly standardized school assessments; external moderation in selected schools; formative assessment data from classroom observations.	Each Term
Program Improvement Feedback	Qualitative insights on implementation challenges, emerging needs, and stakeholder perceptions to inform program adaptation.	Monthly focus groups with NESTs/mentors; monitoring of online PLC forums; school administrator check-ins.	Ongoing
Mentor Certification Completion	Number/percentage of Saudi teachers completing SMTP and receiving certification.	University program records of enrollment, completion, and certification.	Annually
School-Level Implementation Fidelity	Degree to which schools adhere to core program requirements (co-planning time, observation cycles, NEST participation in community initiatives).	Termly school implementation reports; regional coordinator site visit records.	Termly

13.1 Data Utilization

SNIIP differentiates between formative and summative evaluation to distinguish continuous refinement from milestone-based strategic review. Conducted during pilot and early implementation cycles, formative evaluation employs selected indicators to generate timely evidence for adjustments to mentor preparation, induction materials, and regional support structures, enabling emerging challenges to be addressed proactively throughout implementation.

Summative evaluation, conducted at predefined milestones, generates annual reports informing strategic planning, resource allocation, and Ministry-level policy decisions. By integrating longitudinal trends with qualitative insights, these reviews will provide evidence regarding program effectiveness rather than presuming effectiveness in advance.

Data review follows a structured cascade across educational levels. At the school level, principals and mentors use termly findings to inform local adjustments such as modifying observation schedules or co-planning routines. Regionally, Cultural Liaison Officers and Pedagogical Trainers analyze aggregated data to identify cross-site patterns and coordinate responses. At the national level, the National Program Coordinator leads quarterly M&E reviews to synthesize findings and guide program refinement. This multilevel structure balances contextual flexibility with implementation coherence.

Findings are communicated through quarterly institutional reports, annual public summaries, and personalized feedback to participating NESTs and mentors. At all levels, monitoring is presented as a mechanism for collective

learning and professional growth rather than individual evaluation.

13.2 Qualitative Methodology and Integration

Qualitative inquiry complements quantitative measures by providing contextual depth and illuminating the mechanisms underlying observed patterns. Each term, semi-structured interviews are conducted with a purposive sample of NESTs representing diverse regions, school levels, and experience profiles, exploring professional development, cultural adjustment, and mentoring experiences. Interviews are transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis using NVivo software.

Monthly focus groups with rotating cohorts of NESTs and mentors investigate issues emerging from survey data and implementation reports, exploring factors contributing to regional variations in well-being scores and strategies for navigating cross-cultural classroom challenges.

Qualitative analysis follows a structured, multi-stage process. Two researchers independently code a transcript subset to establish inter-rater reliability before developing a shared coding framework for the full dataset. Themes are refined iteratively and validated through member checking, then triangulated with quantitative data, enabling statistical patterns to be interpreted in light of participants' experiences and contextual factors. Mixed-methods findings are reviewed quarterly to inform program decision-making.

13.3 Governance and Accountability

Clearly defined governance structures support methodological consistency and accountability. The National Program Coordinator oversees the M&E framework, including data collection, instrument quality, and translation of findings into policy actions. Regional Cultural Liaison Officers administer surveys, conduct site visits and focus groups, and submit termly reports. University partners lead annual impact studies and qualitative analyses, while an independent evaluator conducts biannual reviews to ensure implementation fidelity, transparency, and credibility.

All instruments, surveys, observation rubrics, and interview protocols are centrally maintained and version-controlled. Data collectors receive standardized training, and annual inter-rater reliability checks ensure consistency in observations across regions.

13.4 Ethical Safeguards

The M&E framework is underpinned by rigorous ethical principles protecting participant rights and upholding research integrity. Informed consent is systematically obtained, with transparent disclosure of data use, access protocols, and voluntary participation. All data are anonymized and stored in secure, password-protected systems, with reporting restricted to aggregate or pseudonymized formats. The framework aligns with Saudi national data protection laws and international standards such as BERA and undergoes annual ethical review by the partner university's research ethics committee.

Particular attention is given to mitigating power dynamics in mentor-NEST relationships. Interviewers and facilitators are trained to foster non-evaluative environments, and participants are assured their contributions will not impact their employment or professional standing. Referral pathways to support services are available when sensitive concerns arise.

SNIIP's M&E framework is designed to transform future empirical evidence into actionable insights by synthesizing quantitative metrics, qualitative inquiry, governance protocols, and ethical safeguards, reframing assessment as a catalyst for institutional learning and national educational reform rather than mere compliance.

14. Anticipated Outcomes and Educational Impact

The SNIIP framework links individual teacher development with institutional and systemic transformation, conceptualized across three interdependent levels, teacher, institutional, and systemic, that are theorized as mutually reinforcing for enduring impact. These outcomes will be examined through the M&E framework (Section 13).

14.1 Teacher-Level Outcomes

The SNIIP framework centers on the development of teachers' intercultural and pedagogical competencies while sustaining professional engagement. Through its sequential phases, the program creates a pathway for developing adaptive expertise aligned with the linguistic, cultural, and institutional demands of the Saudi EFL context. Potential indicators include lesson plan adaptations, integration of culturally relevant examples, and reflective insights shared during mentor debriefing sessions (M&E Indicator 2: Quality of Mentor Collaboration).

Professional dispositions, intercultural sensitivity, reflective praxis, and pedagogical flexibility are assessed through classroom observations, reflective portfolios, and validated self-assessment instruments. Changes in self-efficacy, job

satisfaction, and emotional resilience will be examined through quarterly well-being surveys (M&E Indicator 1: NEST Satisfaction & Well-Being). Together, these represent prospective outcomes rather than established findings and are evaluated during pilot implementation.

14.2 Institutional Outcomes

Building on teacher-level developments, SNIIP aims to contribute to the broader institutional context by fostering a culture of collaborative professionalism that bridges expatriate and local instructors through protected co-planning sessions, mentor-NEST-led professional development workshops, and cross-departmental resource banks (M&E Indicator 7: School-Level Implementation Fidelity).

A further institutional objective is the establishment of a sustainable instructional leadership pipeline. Through the SMTP, schools can develop certified in-house instructional leaders who provide pedagogical coaching, facilitate reflective practice, and support instructional innovation, tracked through mentor certification completion rates (M&E Indicator 6: Mentor Certification Completion). The extent to which this investment in internal capacity becomes embedded within schools' long-term organizational culture will require empirical evaluation.

14.3 Systemic Outcomes

Individual and institutional advancements are hypothesized to contribute to systemic outcomes, including enhanced teacher competence, collaborative professionalism, and sustainable mentoring capacity, which may in turn contribute to student English language development. SNIIP proposes a target of 70% of students in NEST-served classrooms achieving established curriculum benchmarks annually; this figure represents a planned performance benchmark rather than an observed finding and will be evaluated using M&E Indicator 4: Student Learning Outcomes. Achievement gaps between NEST and non-NEST classrooms will also be monitored to inform continuous improvement.

The initiative also proposes a target of 90% retention over the two-year contract period (M&E Indicator 3: Teacher Retention Rate). This is a programmatic target, not an established retention rate. Exit interview data will be used to identify factors associated with retention and departure and to guide ongoing improvements.

The proposed initiative may provide a basis for assessing potential cost-effectiveness and return on investment, particularly through analysis of recruitment, retraining, and turnover costs. Such effects, however, cannot be assumed before implementation and will require systematic economic and outcome evaluation. Challenges such as mentor workload, resource disparities, and varying school commitment will be monitored through the M&E framework and addressed through targeted regional support.

Accordingly, SNIIP should currently be regarded as a proposed, theoretically grounded and evidence-informed framework rather than a validated model. Whether it achieves that status will depend on findings generated through pilot implementation and subsequent empirical evaluation. The initiative is strategically aligned with the objectives of human capital development and educational transformation outlined in Saudi Vision 2030.

15. Discussion

This section examines the core principles, implementation strategies, and policy implications of SNIIP, highlighting how the program reconceptualizes NEST induction as a developmental, intercultural process. It addresses practical challenges, outlines mechanisms for sustaining and scaling the initiative, and identifies research priorities to inform evidence-informed refinement and long-term impact. Because SNIIP has not yet undergone full pilot implementation, the discussion distinguishes between theoretical rationale, proposed mechanisms, anticipated outcomes, and empirical findings that remain to be established.

15.1 Core Principles of the SNIIP Model

SNIIP proposes a model for integrating NESTs into host education systems, repositioning them from temporary linguistic resources into active partners in developing local educational capacity. This approach reconceptualizes teacher induction as a developmental, intercultural process that supports the development of professional identity, pedagogical practice, and institutional sustainability.

15.1.1 Intercultural Learning as Mutual Exchange

Intercultural induction may be most productive when host instructors and NESTs engage in reciprocal learning, a principle SNIIP operationalizes through mentorship and community-immersion phases that integrate communicative methodologies with local pedagogical knowledge. This exchange creates a basis for professional identity development, pedagogical adaptability, and cultural fluency among both Saudi and NEST instructors, embodying

SNIIP's core partnership principle.

Importantly, this repositioning does not depend on the assumption that native English-speaking teachers are inherently superior to Saudi or other NNEST educators. Rather, SNIIP conceptualizes NESTs and Saudi teachers as holders of complementary forms of linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and institutional expertise, with reciprocal collaboration supporting ongoing professional learning. This orientation is consistent with scholarship on native-speakerism, which has challenged the assumption that native English speakers should be regarded as the ideal or inherently superior language teachers (Medgyes, 1992; Holliday, 2005, 2006; Moussu & Llurda, 2008).

15.1.2 From Orientation to Transformation

Unlike traditional orientation programs focused on logistical concerns, SNIIP prioritizes reflective and relational development as an ongoing process. Through pre-arrival mentorship, well-being frameworks, and post-placement support, SNIIP proposes to reframe professional integration as a dynamic continuum that begins before arrival and extends throughout a teacher's professional experience.

15.1.3 Local Capacity and Sustainability

SMTP professionalizes the mentoring role, ensuring pedagogical growth is locally anchored. By cultivating a proposed network of trained mentors, SNIIP could contribute to national objectives of localization and educational capacity-building. This approach creates a foundation for longer-term capacity building by embedding professional development within local institutions.

15.2 Implementation Challenges and Adaptive Design

Despite its strong theoretical foundation, SNIIP faces several practical challenges, including variations in mentor quality, workload pressures, resource disparities, and differences in school and regional contexts. The intensive mentoring model may involve substantial financial and human-resource costs, particularly when implemented at scale or in under-resourced settings. Sustaining the model may therefore require careful consideration of mentor recruitment, training, compensation, workload allocation, and the availability of qualified mentors. In addition, Saudi mentor-teachers may experience increased responsibilities or implementation fatigue, which could contribute to resistance or reduced engagement if adequate institutional support and workload adjustments are not provided.

Scalability is also complicated by the considerable variation among the regional contexts represented in the proposed pilot, including differences in school resources, staffing capacity, local needs, and institutional conditions. Consequently, implementation strategies that are effective in one setting may require modification in another, limiting the extent to which findings can be generalized across all contexts. SNIIP addresses these challenges through continuous pilot-phase feedback and an adaptive design process that preserves the program's core principles while allowing flexibility in implementation. Future implementation should therefore incorporate context-sensitive planning, sustainable resource allocation, ongoing mentor support, and systematic monitoring of costs and workload. These measures are important for maintaining program fidelity while enabling feasible and equitable scaling across diverse Saudi educational settings.

The pilot should therefore be treated not only as an effectiveness evaluation but also as an opportunity to examine implementation burden, mentor acceptance, resource requirements, cost implications, and contextual variation before any national expansion is considered.

15.3 Integrated Policy and Sustainability Recommendations

To support SNIIP's long-term potential and address implementation challenges, its guiding principles could be considered for integration into national educational reform efforts. This requires support through policy frameworks, institutional structures, and financial mechanisms. The following recommendations outline structural measures to support potential future implementation and evaluation of the program.

15.3.1 Institutionalization of Induction

SNIIP could be considered for incorporation into the national teacher-induction framework for NESTs through structured induction modules, specified mentorship timelines, and clearly defined learning outcomes, subject to evidence from pilot evaluation and policy review. National integration could support equitable implementation, consistent professional support, and reduced variation in program quality across regions.

15.3.2 Mentor Certification and Recognition

Establishing a certification pathway for Saudi mentors would recognize their role, incentivize participation, and create a clear career trajectory within the public education system. This certification could include competency

benchmarks, professional development milestones, and assessments of mentoring effectiveness, professionalizing the mentor role and reinforcing mentors as partners in intercultural capacity-building.

15.3.3 Sustainable Funding Mechanisms

Securing annual funding for mentor stipends, digital infrastructure, and program evaluation would be important if the program demonstrates feasibility and is subsequently scaled. Reliable financial support could ensure program continuity, address resource disparities among schools, and facilitate ongoing refinement. A formal cost analysis should accompany future scaling decisions to determine whether the intensive mentoring model is financially sustainable.

15.3.4 Centralized Digital Repository

A national digital platform hosting training modules, exemplary lesson plans, reflective case studies, and research findings could facilitate shared learning, support cross-regional consistency, and enable scalability. Managed by the Ministry in collaboration with universities and integrated with M&E data, the repository could help reduce mentor workloads, disseminate effective practices, and serve as an evidence base for decision-making.

15.4 Future Directions: A Sustained Research Agenda

A dedicated research program is essential for guiding the continuous, evidence-informed development of SNIIP and for determining whether the proposed framework achieves its stated outcomes. Each priority outlined below is connected to the M&E framework (Section 13).

15.4.1 Longitudinal and Outcome-Based Studies

Research must advance beyond short-term satisfaction surveys to explore SNIIP's long-term impact. Longitudinal studies over 3 to 5 years should examine associations between mentorship quality, teacher retention, and student achievement, utilizing M&E Indicators 2, 3, and 4 to build an empirical evidence base concerning program efficacy.

15.4.2 Cross-Regional and Cultural Analysis

Comparative studies across Saudi regions can illuminate how local institutional and cultural variables affect program outcomes. Factors such as school size, community engagement, and regional pedagogical norms should be analyzed using disaggregated M&E data to guide targeted adaptations and examine the transferability and contextual limits of the framework nationally.

15.4.3 Collaborative Research Partnerships

Partnerships between Saudi universities and international institutions will enhance evidence-informed refinement of SNIIP and contribute to global knowledge on expatriate teacher integration. Findings will be disseminated through the digital repository and annual reports, informing Ministry policy, mentor training, and program design.

15.4.4 Knowledge Mobilization

Research findings from the pilot and subsequent evaluations are translated into action through quarterly M&E reviews, annual policy briefs, and mentor training updates, ensuring evidence informs program improvement at school, regional, and national levels. Anchored in sustainable policies, professionalized mentoring, digital infrastructure, and a rigorous research agenda, SNIIP could evolve from a proposed pilot framework into a more extensively evaluated and potentially scalable component of Saudi educational reform if supported by empirical evidence. By redefining NESTs as long-term capacity-building partners rather than temporary resources, the program aims to promote enduring intercultural integration and pedagogical development across the national education system.

16. Conclusion

SNIIP offers a coherent, evidence-informed framework for reimagining NEST integration within the Saudi educational system. By foregrounding cultural immersion, pedagogical alignment, structured mentorship, and sustained well-being support, the program positions teacher induction as both a mechanism for professional development and a platform for intercultural exchange.

Through its sequential design, SNIIP proposes a pathway from pilot implementation toward the professionalization of Saudi mentors. This process creates a localized, evidence-informed model that can be empirically evaluated for its ability to align global teaching expertise with national educational priorities. In doing so, it repositions expatriate educators as potential long-term partners in sustainable capacity building rather than temporary linguistic resources, contributing conceptually to human capital development goals associated with Saudi Vision 2030.

Grounded in intercultural adaptation, situated learning, and reflective practice, SNIIP integrates practical innovation with a rigorous conceptual foundation. The framework contributes to discussions on teacher mobility and educational reform. It proposes that sustainable advancement in English language education depends not only on pedagogical expertise but also on systemic structures and relational networks enabling educators to adapt, collaborate, and thrive across cultural contexts. Importantly, this framing does not treat native English-speaking status as a proxy for teaching quality; instead, it recognizes the complementary expertise of NESTs and Saudi/NNEST educators. However, the framework's effectiveness, scalability, cost-effectiveness, and generalizability remain empirical questions to be addressed through the proposed pilot and subsequent research.

Artificial Intelligence Use Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, specifically ChatGPT, were used for language editing, grammar correction, improving clarity, and rephrasing portions of the text. The author reviewed and approved all AI-assisted text and remain fully responsible for the content, accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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