Factors Affecting the Development of Backbone Managers at Vietnam Secondary Schools

Hoang Sy HUNG¹*

¹ Thuong Xuan District, Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam, hoangsyhungdhv@gmail.com

Abstract: Renovation of general education in Vietnam is laying down new requirements for important secondary school administrators. From the theoretical studies on the management staff of the secondary schools, the article focuses on the factors influencing the development of secondary school administrators. This will be the scientific basis for further research for the planning, appointment, training and retraining of key staff at secondary schools to meet the requirements of general education.

Keywords: backbone managers, developing management staff, education management.

1. Introduction

The development of backbone managers at secondary school is part of human resource development theory. Therefore, before deep research, it is necessary to do general research on human resource development.

According to Leonard Nadler, human resources development has three main tasks: human resource education and training, human resource development and creating a favorable environment for human resources development (Do Minh & Nguyen, 2001). In Leonard Nadler's book, "Developing Human Resource," published in 1980, the concepts and scientific arguments for human resource development tasks have been shown. This theory of human resource development has been effectively applied in many areas of human resource management in society. Following theories of (Nadler, 1980), (Christian Batal 2002), the authors have based on the theory of human resource development to go to the specific activities of state management agencies to develop human resources in the organizations to meet the requirements of public affairs.

2. Purpose of the study

This research aims to clarify the factors influencing the development of key management staff in Vietnam secondary schools in the current period.

3. Research questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:
1. Viewpoints about backbone managers at secondary school?
2. What is the capacity of administrators and key administrators at Vietnam secondary schools?
3. What are factors influencing the development of backbone administrators at Vietnam secondary school?

4. Research method

This study use following methods: theoretical studies (analysis, synthesis, systematized, generalized, ...); Practical observation; Interviewing experts, education management, teachers and students.

Based on the theory and practice, the author clarified the views of key managers in secondary schools.
Then, the author did questionnaires on the development of backbone administrators in 20 secondary schools in the north central region of Vietnam.

This research aims to address the important factors affecting the development of backbone administrators in these schools.

We used questionnaires for some teachers in 20 secondary schools in the North Central region of Vietnam with 195 delivered surveys, in which 189 surveys were answered (Where: 52 Principals, Vice – principals; 80 Head of Department; 57 Teachers).

1. The influence of state management factors on the development of backbone managers at secondary school (Table 1).

2. The influence of factors from socio-economic, cultural traditions, customs and social psychology on the development of backbone managers at secondary school (Table 2).

3. The influence of school management factor on the development of backbone managers at secondary school (Table 3).

Then we conducted the orientation assessment. Since then, we have come to the conclusion of factors affecting the development of backbone managers at Vietnam secondary schools.

The results of this research will be used for a program to develop and train the backbone administrator staff in Vietnam secondary schools.

5. The content of the research

5.1. Perspectives on management capacity

The concept of capacity was mentioned very early. In the study of the development of higher education based on capacity, two authors (Barman & Konwar, 2011) claimed that the concept of "capacity" first emerged in Europe in the 16th century when they used equivalent words such as force - ability - competence; authority - jurisdiction; Latin calls "competentia" the ability to allow or skill and experience to do what is needed. In another study, (Selznick, Shaikhah 2009), argued that the category of "capacity" was developed in early 1957, originally used in the field of education to describe the "competency" practical teachers (Bowdenard Masters 1993, Hoffmann 1999).

The concept of competence was more clearly demonstrated in 1973 in the presentation of David McClelland, a Harvard psychologist, on "Examining competence rather than intelligence." David McClelland argued that the traditional way of testing based on attitudes and intelligence is not enough and testing capacity is necessary. The author has pointed out the
need to integrate attitudes and personal attributes into the capacity and to identify the capacity of an activity by observing the person who best performs the activity (Quan., 2016).

Up to now many scholars have come up with a definition of competence. In 1992, Boam and Sparrow defined competence as “a set of behavioral manifestations associated with a job position to complete the function and task of that position at a proficient level”. (Spencer 1993) defines competence as the ability of an individual to fulfill the required skills for a particular job. The above authors share the same emphasis on the characteristics of individual performance when performing a task with superiority in performance and they divide these characteristics into five categories including motivation, personality, comprehension, knowledge and skills.

According to (Lucia, Lepsinger 1999), competence is the tool to identify the skills, knowledge, attitudes and characteristics that individuals need to effectively play a role in the organization, thereby helping the organization achieve strategic objectives.

Studies by (Boyatzis 1982, Fleishman, Wetrogen, Uhlman, Marshall-Mies 1995, Kathryn Barto, Graham Matthews 2001; Fulmer, Conger 2004, Gangani, McLean, Braden 2006; Sandberg 2006) add components to the competency models such as motivation, level of work awareness, talents. According to these authors, capacity is referred to “the written description of the measured work habits and personal skills used to achieve the job objective” or “capacity is the set of the ability, the resources of a person or organization to perform a task”.

According to (Kydd Lesley, Crawford Megan, Riches Colin 1997), the author says that the concept of competence goes into 2 directions which are considered as the key to the research and creative application:

+ Britishs assume that capacity is limited by three factors: knowledge, skills, attitude;

+ Americans consider any factor that leads to success, high efficiency to accomplish a task (or good management of activities) is considered competence.

In 2011, the Department of Training and Employment, US Department of Labor, proposed the development of a pyramid-shaped capacity model comprising four classes: (1) Specific Knowledge Competencies; (2) Specific Technical Competencies; (3) Specific Requirements; (4) Management Competencies.

All four levels of competence are based on generic competencies or cross-functional core skills including communication skills; Integrity;
Professionalism; Creation; Reliability; Ready to learn; Quality, personal effectiveness.

A set of basic capacity systems, specific competencies / capabilities in role specific competencies to fulfill specific task requirements called capacity profiles or capacity frameworks.

Leadership and administrator play a very important role as a factor that determines the success or failure of an organization. When referring to the position of an administrator, President Ho Chi Minh said that “cadres are those who explain the Party's and the Government's policies to help people understand and implement these policies and report the situation of the people to the Party and the Government to set the policy properly. cadre is the root of all affairs”. From a deep understanding of the position, role and requirements of an administrator, President Ho Chi Minh suggested that a good management team would be required and training and retraining of cadres is necessary to have a good management team. and “training of cadres is the original work of the Party”(Ho Chi Minh, 2000)

According to Le Quan and his colleagues, the development of leadership and management in Vietnam is still limited, inadequate, has not reached the expectations, targets as well as the requirements and tasks of the new situation. These are: (1) Criteria for leadership evaluation are still general, have not taken the performance of assigned tasks as the main measure for evaluation; (2) The recruitment of leaders and managers is still narrow and limited, the examination content is heavy in terms of professional, but not focused on ability, leadership, ability to persuade and prestige, strategic vision, capacity to gather, ability to run, organization of work ...; (3) the arrangement and use of leadership and management is sometimes dominated by the rationalism and the “Asian mode of production”, placing “heart” above the “mind”. This leads to many leaders who are limited in their capacity but still hold managerial positions leading to ineffective operations that do not meet the requirements of innovation (Quan., 2016).

5.2. Viewpoints about backbone administration staff in secondary schools

5.2.1. Educational administrator

On the basis of understanding the concept of administration staff above, it is possible to apply the concept definition to clarify the concept of educational administrators. According to (Anh, 2003; Nguyen, Van Trang, & Nguyen, 2009; Tran Trung, Nguyen, & Le Trung, 2011) the educational
administrator is essentially a manager working in an educational environment such as a school or educational management agency. Analyzing the role of the manager, the group thinks that the manager does the work through another person, in order to achieve the goals of the organization. In terms of organizational science, the school is an organization, the administrator staff is responsible for monitoring and is responsible for achieving the goals of the school.

According to (To Xuan, 2011) and his colleagues, educational administrators in schools include the principal, deputy head, head and deputy head, head and vice head of the offices. This view is consistent with other studies, but limited in the scale of a school. These authors did consider this concept in accordance with a number of titles that manage works for the principal.

From the concept of managerial staff, it is possible to understand that educational administrators are managers who work in an educational management agency or in an educational organization, in order to operate, guide and implement the decision of the educational leaders.

Today, with the diversified development of education and training, the term "educational administrators" is understood not only be staffs directly or indirectly related to educational management activities, but also people who have managerial responsibilities in the system of non-public schools and foreign organizations operating in accordance with the laws of Vietnam and other International treaties to which Vietnam is a signatory (Thanh. & Hung., 2017).

5.2.2. Backbone secondary school management staff

The concept of "backbone administrators" is now being used quite commonly in socio-political terms through spoken and written language. It is possible to see the word "backbone" is a Chinese origin word (Anh, 2003). By the method of philosophy, it could be understood as following:

- “Bone”: the bones, the innermost part of the whole block, is the main content and the frame of a problem, the essence of a thing, the phenomenon.

- “Back”: is a place to hold, grasp when used, is the main or important part of an object. People must know how to use it right and effectively...

Thus, "Back" and "bone" have in common that they all reflect the main part, the important part, the essence of things (Dictionary, 2001; Studies, 2001) (Studies, 2001), (Nguyen Nhu, 1999)
The use of the term "backbone" refers to the person or group acting as the core of an organization and can carry out the role of initiation, leadership, and supporter to other members of the organization.

President Ho Chi Minh said: Staff is the root of all works. In the management team in general, the backbone manager is the root of that, the core, the most important element of an organization. Backbone managers are the heads of a branch, a locality, a unit of work, production and business, are responsible for organizing the implementation of policies and tasks there, assigning tasks, directing their cadres and civil servants to fulfill their assigned tasks. With a good managerial staff, the contingent of technicians and professional staffs shall be used effectively with all their capabilities. With the good manager, the organization will be strong, improve the efficiency, quality of work.

The same organizational structure, the same policy mechanism, while some schools develop quickly with all performed and completed excellent tasks, other schools are stagnant, all duties are late completed, the staffs’ living standard are very difficult. And the situation is improved by replacing the core management staff. That is the decisive role of backbone administrators.

Backbone administrators include leaders from the central to grassroots level, from the macro level to the micro level. Core managers at each level, each sector are important, need to be built strongly and consistently. For secondary school, backbone administrators include the principal, the vice principal and the specialist team leader.

The backbone administrators of secondary school are managers and teachers who have the ability to have an in-depth understanding of education and teaching, including pedagogical expertise and proficiency, able to control the mind of teachers and school staff, the relationship of the responsible agencies to manage all activities of the school.

Based on my perceptions of the word “backbone” and backbone administrators, I think that the backbone administrators of the secondary school are good at leadership, management and professionalism. They are excellent teachers and educators and have been identified as the core people in teaching, education and teacher development in the school.

Backbone administrators satisfy the following conditions:

1. Pass or exceed the standard of training required for a secondary school teacher;

2. Having recognition of credibility in the team of teachers and staff in following roles:
• Leadership, organizer and manager of the unit, being a specialist in the trained subject, proficient in pedagogy, computer and foreign language.
• The initiator of creative ideas, many innovative ideas.
• Persons who are capable and active in guiding and advising their colleagues and students.
• People have the ability to self-study and constantly develop a career effectively.

5.3. Factors affecting the development of backbone administrator staff in the secondary schools

We investigate factors influencing the development of backbone administrator staff through the study of documents and practices. To make a convincing statement, we used questionnaires for some teachers in 20 secondary schools in the North Central region of Vietnam with 195 delivered surveys, in which 189 surveys were answered (Where: 52 Principals, Vice – principals; 80 Head of Department; 57 Teachers).

The results will be shown as following:

5.3.1. The factors from state management

Education and training in the development process are always subject to the interaction of various elements of the political, socio-economic environment. Determining the impact of influencing factors is very important in the development planning of the national education system, including secondary school level and secondary school management staff. Education development has shown that it is impossible to include all of the factors that influence the educational development planning process, but only a few factors that directly influence the development process of the management staff in secondary school.

**Table 1.** The influence of state management factors on the development of backbone managers at secondary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal, Vice - principal</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>48.08</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>58.75</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40.35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows most participants in the survey found that this is an important factor to pay attention. Especially those who are principals and vice principals with over 84%. They said that this has an impact on the educational policies they are managing. For the group of head of departments and teachers, more than 87% pay much attention to state management, because it affects teaching and income. With a low rate of 3.75%, the head of departments and 15.79% of teachers are not interested in this factor.

After collecting the comments from the questionnaire, I noticed that:

The educational development of a country depends firstly on the country’s leadership in the field of education. A government that pays much attention to education, investing heavily in education, and having the right paths in education development, will grow rapidly, and vice versa. Normally, the direction of a nation is reflected in the policies and guidelines, which show the management mechanism in the orientation of those policies and guidelines. This means that the development of education in general and the development of backbone managers in secondary schools in particular are influenced by the mechanism and policies promulgated by the government depending on the educational policies and guidelines.

If the mechanism and policies of the government are open, providing opportunities for training, fostering and using, it will contribute to stimulating the development of secondary school management staff. If the mechanisms and policies are not open, unscientific, formal and unsuitable for the times, inconsistent with the international context and the practical conditions of the country, they will inhibit the development of Secondary school management staff, not create qualified staff in terms of quantity and quality.

Government mechanisms and policies that may affect the development of secondary management staff in secondary schools are often related to the following issues:

- *Secondary education development policy:* The policy of secondary education universalization implemented by the Government has created favorable conditions for localities, including the northern central provinces to accept all children at secondary school age. This led to the need for the number of backbone manager staff will increase. However, the more important issue of the secondary education development policy is the need to improve the quality of education at this level while improving the quality of education in secondary schools depends much on the management capacity of backbone management team.
- **Education decentralization policy**: Decentralization of education management is the current trend in the world. In Vietnam, decentralization of education management is being implemented in the direction of increasing autonomy and self-responsibility for local and educational establishments. The decentralization policy will, on the one hand, create conditions for localities and educational institutions to be more active in training and fostering the secondary school management staff towards standardization, on the other hand, require backbone managers have the capacity and qualities to be able to fulfill their duties in the context of self-control and self-responsibility.

- **Policy on development of education in mountainous, remote and isolated areas**: This policy sets specific and higher requirements for the backbone management staff of secondary schools in the mountainous districts of the northern central provinces who are directly responsible for management and operation of the school to make educational activities in the school effective in the difficult socio-economic and natural conditions of the mountainous districts of North Central.

- **Policy on development of management staff and teachers**: This policy is reflected in the Directive 40 of the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee and Resolution 90 of the Prime Minister. This policy obliges management levels and individual managers and teachers to have specific plans and programs to improve the quality of staff and individuals in the standardized way.

- **Remuneration regime, recruitment mechanism, promotion**: For the mountainous districts of the northern central provinces, due to the difficult socio-economic conditions, the remuneration regime, recruitment and promotion mechanism have a great impact on the establishment, maintenance and development of backbone management staff in the secondary school, especially for secondary schools in disadvantaged areas.

- **The policy of staff and teachers rotation**: This policy has been implemented by the North Central provinces in the past years and has great impacts on the establishment and development of school management staff in schools. This policy aims to strengthen qualified staffs and teachers at disadvantaged area to upgrade the quality. On the other hand, this policy also aims to train the quality and capacity of management staff and teachers through practical activities in order to select and train talented and qualified management staff.
5.3.2. Factors from Socio-economic, cultural traditions, customs and social psychology

Education is a social activity that takes place in social life and is thus directly influenced by many social factors.

Table 2. The influence of factors from socio-economic, cultural traditions, customs and social psychology on the development of backbone managers at secondary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal, Vice - Principal</td>
<td>21  40.38</td>
<td>22  42.31</td>
<td>6  11.54</td>
<td>3   5.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>42  52.50</td>
<td>27  33.75</td>
<td>8   10.00</td>
<td>3   3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>28  49.12</td>
<td>18  31.58</td>
<td>5   8.77</td>
<td>6  10.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that with over 82% of the Principal and Vice Principal stated that factors from socio-economic, cultural traditions, customs and social psychology have always had a great influence on policies of the development of secondary school staff. They said that the main objective is to improve the quality of education in the local area. Therefore, the above factors are necessary to orient, build and develop core manager staffs at the secondary schools.

Over 86% of Head of departments and teachers agreed with the importance of these factors. These factors have a direct impact on those who work at secondary schools, as well as on the development of backbone manager who directly manage them at present or in future. they may be affected in the present and in the future.

Only 5.77% of the principal and vice principal did not care about these factors. There are a few cases of schools in remote mountainous areas which have difficulty in accessing information. They only focus on school management, and there is no innovation in their management sense. In addition, 3.75% of the head of department, 10.53% of the teachers at these schools area did not have the sense of change. They satisfied with the present.

I suppose that

Economical factors: As mentioned above, improving the quality of the secondary school management staff can not be done in a short time but requires a process and is implemented in many forms. To implement this process requires a certain amount of both financial and human resources in
general, and economic conditions in specific. According to the current management decentralization, the secondary school management staff managed by the Department of Education and Training, therefore the training and retraining of this staff is also the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training, and depending on the budget of the Department of Education and Training. The standardization of the secondary school management staff is fast or slow, depending on the education budget of each locality.

In the difficult economic conditions of the Northern Central provinces, especially in the mountainous districts, limited local budgets and difficulties in the family economy of the management staff themselves will inhibit standardization of the backbone management staff of the secondary schools.

**Population factor:** among the social factors affecting the development of education, the population and the number of people at the school age directly affect the number of schools, teachers and school management staff. At present, the population of our country is over 86 million people, ranked 13th in the world; the number of people attending school is about 22 million people. Vietnam is one of the countries with young population, having so many children at school age while the government pay much attention to secondary education universalization. Therefore, the development of teachers and staff is urgently needed to meet the needs of secondary education.

In order to catch up with the increasing population and the number of pupils going to school, the strategy for education development in the 2011-2020 period has set the target of developing the school management staff in sufficient quantity and quality; providing appropriate remuneration policy for school management staff, encouraging school management to meet standards and exceed current standards.

**Psychological factors:** According to A. Maslow, human natural needs are divided into different levels from low to high, from "bottom" to "peak." Higher level needs will be satisfied when lower level demands are met. Maslow's needs ladder:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High level</th>
<th>Low level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The need for self-improvement</td>
<td>• The need for safety and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The need for love and self-esteem</td>
<td>• Physical and physiological needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The need for ownership and affection (be loved)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beyond all of these needs is the need to perfect yourself, or self-assertion. The individual person or person in the organization primarily acts on demand.

According to Maslow's principle, the secondary school managers themselves will always have needs, including the needs of "high" and "need for self-improvement". It is the "need for self-improvement" that will be an important self-motivating force to promote the development of secondary school management staff following the standardized way.

Traditional cultural factors, customs and habits: Due to the difficulties characteristics of the North Central provinces, cultural traditions and customs create different and interdependent impacts and local characteristics. Well exploite and promote will become a motive force to promote the process of developing the backbone management staff of the secondary school, and vice versa, which may affect the development of that secondary school. These characteristics are psychological self-satisfaction with the current situation in the secondary school management staff; psychological tranquility to solve the harmony of the work of the family and the school of a core management staff are women; limited visibility of the management levels in strengthening the staff of the secondary school management staff in the area, etc. These factors are not good for the development of backbone secondary school management staff of of the North Central Vietnam.

5.2.3. Factors from schools

The need to improve the management capacity and quality of key management staff not only stemmed from the demands of higher management agencies and society, but also from the internal needs of the school itself and managers themselves.

Table 3. The influence of school management factor on the development of backbone managers at secondary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal, Vice-principal</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44.23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>48.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>57.89</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 3, over 92% of the principals and vice-principals said that the management of the school has the direct and immediate impact on key executives. And 81.25% of the head of departments, 91.23% of teachers agreed with this opinion. Thus, it can be seen that all objects in the school pay much attention to the management of the school. However, a small percentage of people who work at mountainous schools did not concern about this factor.

I suppose that

First, the pressure of autonomy and self-responsibility:

Once self-reliance and self-responsibility have been implemented in the school, this mechanism requires backbone managers to have modern management knowledge and skills, operate in a scientific way basing on advanced management tools to ensure a successful school, sustainable development, constantly improve teachers’ material and spiritual lives. This pressure became the first intrinsic factor that forced the backbone managers to be trained.

Second, the requirements of the staff, teachers of the school.

The material and spiritual benefits of staff and teachers in the context of self-reliance and self-responsibility depend on the development and success of the school. That’s the reason why all staff and teachers require backbone managers to have the qualities not only of the leader but also of the managers, to learn basic knowledge, modern management methods of leadership and management of the school.

5.2.4. Other factors

According to (Sy Hung, 2017; Tinh, Hau, & Hieu, 2017) state that in addition to the above factors, the role of pedagogic training institutions, especially local pedagogical universities, socio-political organizations, professional social organizations, etc are very important in the process of raising standards for the key management staff of secondary schools. If pedagogic universities, socio-political organizations are mobilized and actively participate in the training and retraining of the key management staff, creating a favorable environment for the development of core management staff. It creates good impulses to speed up the standard raising process for the secondary school management staff.

6. Conclusion

Educational managers in general and backbone manager at secondary schools in particular besides being an educator, the leader, they are also public officials who contribute to the success of the education
Factors Affecting the Development of Backbone Managers at Vietnam …
Hoang Sy HUNG

reform. Development requirements for improving the quality of backbone administrators have become a central issue in the entire education sector. General education reform is now required to implement a series of measures to enhance the quality assurance of teachers, staff and equipment, financial resources, in which new scientific management is decisive for the education reform, paving the way for the implementation of the guidelines has been proposed. The author believes that the results of this study will make a certain contribution to the rationale Development of secondary school management staff towards improving the quality of general education.

References


242

To Xuan, D. (2011). *The new context, the new educational manager*. Vietnam Hanoi National University Publishing House