
PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF EDUCATION INNOVATION IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a study aiming to assess the current status of the competencies of primary teachers in Vietnam in response to the need for education innovation in Vietnam. Data were collected from 170 managers working in the provincial Departments of Education and Training, principals, deputy principals of elementary schools and 852 primary school teachers in a southern province of Vietnam. Findings from the study show that: the level of competencies of primary teachers to professional standards is only slightly above average. At the same time, the level of satisfaction of basic professional qualifications of teachers compared to the requirements of educational reform is moderate. Based on the current situation, the study also proposed measures to improve the capacity of primary teachers in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Primary Education; Primary Education Teacher; Education Innovation*

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Government of Vietnam has adopted important policies: *"Fundamentally and universally reform Vietnam's education in the direction of standardization, modernization, socialization, democratization and international integration, in Reform of education management mechanism, development of teachers and educational administrators is a key step"*[12, p.1]. *Basic and comprehensive reform of education and training, including education and training at the elementary level* [2]:

- About the goal: There is a big change in educational goals. According to the 2005 Law on Education, the goal of Primary Education is to help students form the basis for a sound and sustainable development of ethics, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and basic skills to continue in secondary school [11, Clause 2, Article 27]. The new target mentioned in the Resolution of the 8th plenum of the XIth National Conference on fundamental and comprehensive

renewal of education and training is to focus on intellectual development, physical development, quality and competencies development for citizenship, identify and foster talents, vocational orientation for students; Enhance the quality of comprehensive education, focus on the ideal education, tradition, ethics, lifestyle, foreign languages, informatics, practice skills and competencies. Apply knowledge into practice. Develop creativity, self-study, encourage lifelong learning.

These goals compared to the traditional goals are new. First, their emphasis is placed on the formation of "civic competence, practice competence and use of knowledge in practice". Competency development is one of the most important requirements, most clearly demonstrating the innovation of this educational goal. Competency is understood to be the integrated of many factors (knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and excitement, etc) to carry out effective work. This concept governs all elements of the educational

process, from content, methodology to evaluation of learning outcomes. The goal of competency development is to overcome the over-emphasis on equipping academics knowledge; Learners know many theories, but they apply poorly in practice. Second, the goal of "focus on foreign languages (firstly English), informatics" is also new content to meet the requirements of international integration and the knowledge economy [4].

- Regarding content and methodology: Strongly transfer the knowledge based education system into the comprehensive development of the qualities and competencies of learners. Learning with practice; Argument attached to reality; school education in combination with family education and social education. The emphasis is on integrated teaching and differentiated teaching to reduce the number of subjects, to integrate the current issues of life into academic subjects and activities, and to maximize the potential of each learner [4].

- Regarding testing, assessment and evaluation of education quality: To renovate the testing, assessment and evaluation of the quality of education as a breakthrough solution for the education reform. The testing, assessment and evaluation of the quality of education will be renewed in the following direction:

1. Renovation of content, methods of assessment (examination, final examination, examinations, graduation). Transfer from the assessment of knowledge that learners have to assess the formation of capacity, qualities of learners.
2. Incorporation the results of periodic assessments by the instructor with the results of the tests, assessment of the instructor and the self-assessment of the learners; evaluation of the school and the evaluation of society.

Separately evaluate the learning outcomes of each student with the quality evaluation of schools, localit and nationwide [4].

Develop and approve the new general education curriculum, focusing on enhancement of practical experiences for moral education, lifestyles

and skills training for students [8, Solution 3]. New curricula, new textbooks are developed, compiled with the direction of integration in the classroom, the lower level and gradual differentiation in the upper level of education [14].

The Government also set out the tasks and solutions to develop the contingent of teachers and administrators in order to meet the demand for education and training reforms. There are preferential policies for teachers and educational administrators. The recruitment, use, treatment, honoring of teachers and educational administrators must be based on the assessment of professional capacity, ethics and effectiveness [2].

The policies on developing the teachers and educational managers are specified in the Education Development Strategy 2011-2020: "Standardization in training, selection, use and evaluation of teachers and educational managers. Pay attention to improving the professional morality, style and character of the staff to set an example for students "[13, p.11].

To strongly renovate the objectives, contents and methods of pre-service and in-service training, and evaluation of learning outcomes of teachers and education managers meeting the requirements of higher quality, responsibility, ethics and professional capacity [8, Solution 5]. Establishment of the professional teaching standards besides the system of basic requirements on political qualities, ethics and lifestyles; knowledge; pedagogical skills that primary school teachers need to follow the Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers [3], in order to prepare for the renovation of the new curriculum and textbook which requires New basic skills such as professional autonomy, ability to organize experiential activities, integrated teaching capacity, distributed teaching ability, ability to check and assess students according to their capacity.

This reseach was conducted to assess the current status of the capacity of the primary school teachers to meet the current educational reform requirements, contributing to improving management

effectiveness in primary schools in Dak Nong province. It also addressed some difficulties in southern part of Vietnam.

2. RESEARCH CONTENT

2.1. Objectives and Method of Research

Purpose of the study was to assess the current status of Dak Nong province's competencies of primary teachers in response to the current educational reform. The study was conducted in 5 phases: (1) development of questionnaire, (2) piloting survey, (3) formal survey, (4) intensive interview and (5) data analysis and processing. The period is from May 2016 to January 2017.

The main research method used was questionnaire survey. The content of the questionnaire consists of a questionnaire system that is formulated in a logical manner, suitable for the purpose of research in order to exploit the necessary information from the research objects. The issues were evaluated on a Likert scale, including 5 levels (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree").

We base on the average score of the survey criteria fall into what range: poor, average, good, or very good to make a judgment. The distinction between the levels is 0.8 [according to the formula $(\text{Max} - \text{Min}) / n$], so the mean score (MS) for the levels is:

- Very poor: $1 \leq \text{MS} < 1,8$
- Poor: $1,8 \leq \text{MS} < 2,6$
- Average: $2,6 \leq \text{MS} < 3,4$
- Good: $3,4 \leq \text{MS} < 4,2$
- Very good: $4,2 \leq \text{MS} \leq 5$.

The research was conducted based on the evaluation of 170 managers working in the Departments, Bureaus of Education and Training (BOET); The Principals, Deputy principals of primary schools and 852 primary school teachers in Dak Nong. About CBQL: Male respondents accounted for 53.4%, and female accounted for 46.6%; The lowest age of respondents was 33 years, the highest was 59

years, and the average age was 42.52 (SD = 5,973). About the primary teachers: the number of male respondents accounted for 23.5%, and female accounted for 76.5%; The lowest age of the participants was 23 years, the highest was 58 years, and the average age was 36.67 (SD = 8,668).

Survey data was processed using SPSS software version 16.0. Statistical indicators used in this study were percentage, mean score (MS), standard deviation (SD).

2.2. Findings and Discussion

2.2.1. The responsiveness of primary teachers to the requirements of the professional standard under the Decision No. 14/2007/ QD-BGDDT dated 04/05/2007 promulgating the regulation on the professional standards of primary teachers.

Professional standard of teachers is a system of basic requirements on the political qualities, ethics and lifestyles; knowledge; pedagogical skills that need to be met in order to meet the goals of primary education [3, Article 2]. Standards include three areas: political qualities, ethics, lifestyles; knowledge and pedagogical skills. Each field consists of 5 requirements. The Standard's requirements are basic, specific to each area of the Standard that requires the teacher to meet the goals of primary education at each stage. Each requirement consists of four criteria. The criterion of the Standard is the specific content of each of the requirements of the Standard that reflects one aspect of the professional competencies of the primary teacher [8, Article 4].

The results of the survey in Table 1 show that for responsiveness of professional standard requirements according to Decision No. 14/2007/QD-BGDDT dated 04/05/2007, the level of responsiveness of Dak Nong province's teachers to requirements in the fields of political qualities, ethics, lifestyles have reached the mean score (MS) > 3.4 (good level). For the survey for managers, the MS on the requirements in the field of pedagogical skills and requirements in the field of knowledge are only

average (3.01 and 3.02 which are under 3.4) . The reason is that the starting point of the primary teachers is quite low, some teachers have reached the standard or above the standard but the initial level is pedagogical vocational schools (9 plus 2, 9 plus 3, etc.). The province has not had supportive policies for teachers to improve their qualification as some other

provinces in the region. This has limited the rate of teachers attending the professional courses, self-study to upgrade their standards in recent years. The province has no qualified teachers at postgraduate level. This requires pre-service and in-service training to help the team meet the requirements of the professional standards.

Table 1. Current Status Of Responsiveness Of Primary Teachers In Dak Nong Province To The Professional Teacher Standards

No	Content	Managers, Principals, Vice Principals		Teachers		t(1020)
		MS	SD	MS	SD	
1	Requirements in the fields of political quantities, ethnics, lifestyles	3,51	0,568	3,65	0,567	3,077**
2	Requirements in the field of knowledge	3,02	0,554	3,40	0,562	8,148***
3	Requirements in the field of pedagogical skills	3,01	0,565	3,34	0,564	6,875***

Note: **: $p < 0,01$; ***: $p < 0,001$

The results of the Independent - Samples T Test analysis in Table 1 also show that there is a difference between the opinions of managers at DOET, the BoET, principals and vice principals of primary school teachers compared to teachers' assessment of the level of responsiveness of Dak Nong primary school teachers to the requirements of professional standards. This can be explained by the fact that the teachers are still heavy on achievement or results, so they often self-evaluate higher than they are.

2.2.2. The responsiveness of teachers to the basic professional skills and competences meets the renovation of new curriculum and textbook.

In addition to the system of basic requirements for political qualities, ethics, lifestyles; knowledge; pedagogical skills that need to be achieved by primary teachers in accordance with the Professional standards. In order to prepare for the renovation of the new curriculum and textbook, the primary teachers need to have the following new professional skills and competencies to organize experiential activities, integrated teaching capacity, differentiated teaching

capacity, and capacity to monitor and assess students' competencies.

The results of the survey in Table 2 show that the level of responsevenness of Dak Nong primary school teachers to their basic professional skills has met the renovation of the new curriculum and textbook with average mean score (> 2.6 and < 3.4 respectively). In which the ability to organize experiential experience; Integrated teaching capacity; and the teacher self-assessment competency has low average scores (only 2.7 and 2.64). Managers assessment in terms of the integrated teaching and learning competencies of teachers is similar to teacher self-assessment.

Regarding the assessment competencies, the scores of managers at DOET, BOET, principals, vice principals and primary teachers are at the highest level (MD = 3.36, SD = 0.631 and MD = 3.07; SD = 0.650).

Table 2. Current Status Of Primary School Teachers In Dak Nong Province With Regard To The New Basic Professional Skills To Meet The Reform Of The Curriculum And Textbook

No	Content	Managers, Principals, Vice Principals		Teachers		t(1020)
		MS	SD	MS	SD	
1	Competency of professional autonomy	3,11	0,378	3,04	0,468	1,667
2	Organizational competency for experiential activity	3,15	3,305	2,69	0,597	1,84
3	Integrated teaching capacity	2,85	0,499	2,70	0,631	3,358**
4	Differentiated teaching capacity	2,75	0,553	2,64	0,669	2,375*
5	Ability to check and evaluate students according to their abilities	3,36	0,631	3,07	0,650	5,520***

Remark: *: $p < 0,05$; **: $p < 0,01$; ***: $p < 0,001$

The results of the Independent - Samples T Test analysis in Table 2 also show that there is no difference in the content of "Competency for Professional Autonomy" and "Competency for organizing experimental activities". There are differences between teachers of DOET, BOET, Principals, Vice Principals, and primary teachers as compared to teacher evaluations. Teacher self-assessments of integrated teaching competencies, differentiated teaching, evaluation and assessment of students on the basis of their own competencies have a lower average score than teachers at all levels. The difference is that teachers understand themselves better.

2.3. Recommendation for Measures to be Considered

Based on the findings of the survey, in order to improve the capacity of the primary teachers to meet the current educational reform requirements, to increase the contribution of primary schools in Dak Nong, it is recommended to complete the following solutions:

1) Firstly, to improve the staffing planning. Accordingly, the following contents should be implemented well:

- Fully disseminate and publicize the contents of the Master Plan for Human Resource Management in schools.

- Involve the participation of management institutes and related forces in the development and

implementation of the work of human resource planning.

- Expected general goals, specific objectives and solutions implemented in the planning of human resources for practice.

- The planning of human resources in primary school teachers in Dak Nong province must be based on the strategic plan of the school; based on the implementation of the workforce forecasting; and based on the inventory of human resources in practice.

2) Secondly, we must analyze the work of primary teachers. Accordingly, the following content must be implemented well:

- Indicate the duties and standards to be fulfilled in the conduct of the teaching of the primary school teachers in accordance with new curriculum and textbooks innovations.

- Clarify the required competencies of the primary teachers to meet the new curriculum reform.

3) Third, to renovate the recruitment and use of primary school teachers. Accordingly, the following content must be implemented well:

- There is a close cooperation between the schools, the Department of Education and the Department of Internal Affairs in recruitment.

- Standardization of contents to be checked, tested (content to be achieved when practicing one lesson, content interview) in staff recruitment.

- Having a flexible recruitment method suitable with the actual situation of the unit.

- The recruitment of practice teachers must be based on the teaching needs of the school and standard practice.

- Good implementation of the use of indigenous ethnic minorities and existing local ethnic minority teachers in ethnic minority schools.

4) Fourthly, to renovate pre-service and in-service training of primary teachers to meet the requirements of education reform, especially the renovation of curriculum and textbook. Accordingly, the implementation of the content should be done well:

- Develop a sense of self-study, self-improvement in the university.

- The pre-service and in-service training must be done to supplement and update new knowledge, skills and teaching methods for primary teachers, especially teaching methods in the direction of developing quality and competencies for teaching as well as the new basic skills and professional skills required for the new elementary curriculum such as: competency for professional Autonomy, competency to organizing experiment experience, differentiated teaching capacity, and capacity for examination and assessment of students' ability.

- The pre-service and in-service training needs are identified through the primary teachers evaluation system and come from the teachers themselves. The contents, curricula, forms and time of pre-service and in-service training shall be based on criteria of professional standards, requirements for updating knowledge and skills for professional activities. To evaluate the effectiveness of pre-service and in-service training after each training course in order to understand the contents learned by the teachers and the application of knowledge into the practice.

5) Fifthly, the evaluation of the primary teachers should be completed in the direction of the results, quality and progress of the students as the main measure to "measure" the competency of the teachers. As follows:

- To set up a fair, accurate and correct assessment system according to the provisions of law and evaluation criteria in association with the school's strategic objectives. Getting results, quality, and student progress are key solutions to "measure" the competencies of the teachers.

- Develop clear, specific, reasonable evaluation criteria that can classify the primary school teacher. Evaluation data should be used for other decisions on pre-service and in-service training, rewarding, etc to improve working skills, workin performance and serve as a basis for professional development orientation for primary teachers.

3. CONCLUSION

In addition to the system of basic requirements for political qualities, ethics, lifestyles; knowledge; pedagogical skills that need to be achieved by the primary teacher in accordance with the professional standards for Primary teachers [3], in order to prepare for the renovation of the new curriculum and textbook, the primary teachers need to have new basic professional skills. Research results show that:

- For professional standards: Dak Nong province's level of responsiveness with requirements in the fields of political qualities, ethics and lifestyles has reached the level of 3.4. However, according to managers assessment, the MS in terms of pedagogical requirements and knowledge requirements was only 3.01 and 3.02, respectively.

- With regard to basic professional skills and competences, the new curriculum and textbook has been updated: The level of responsiveness of primary teachers in Dak Nong province is only medium (2.6 <MS <3.4).

On the basis of the current situation, the study also proposed measures to improve the capacity of primary teachers to meet current educational reform requirements.

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