



Original Article

# Leadership and Management Capacity of High School Administrators in Son La Province

Nguyen Huy Hoang\*, Vu Viet Hung, Vu Quoc Cuong,  
Mai Anh Duc, Nguyen Huy Huynh, Nguyen Van Luc

*Son La Province Department of Education and Training, Thanh Nien, To Hieu, Son La, Vietnam*

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**Abstract:** In the current context of economic integration and development, the role of high school administrators in Son La has become increasingly important. Their leadership and management capacity plays a key role in shaping the quality of education, while meeting the diverse challenges of the modern education system. This article focuses on researching and evaluating the leadership and management capacity of high school administrators in Son La. This study will analyze new dimensions and trends in educational leadership and management capacity, especially at the high school level. By using qualitative and quantitative research methods, the article will focus on measuring and evaluating factors affecting the leadership and management capacity of high school administrators. The results of this study not only help better understand the leadership and management capacity of high school administrators in Son La but also propose solutions and strategies to improve the quality of the local education system, aiming to build an education system that increasingly meets the diverse needs of society and contributes to the sustainable development of local communities.

**Keywords:** Leadership and management capacity; managers; administrator, quality of education.

## 1. Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, education is considered an important resource and main driving force for the development of every country. In Vietnam, the education system went through a journey full of challenges and opportunities, especially in rural, mountainous, island areas

and areas with a significant population of ethnic minorities. In this context, the role of high school administrators in mountainous areas, such as in Son La province, becomes extremely important. They not only play a role in building the knowledge foundation for the young generation but also make an important contribution to formulating students' thinking, personality, ability to adapt to changing contexts, which will shape the political, economic, cultural and educational future of the locality and the nation.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [hoang.nguyenhuysl@gmail.com](mailto:hoang.nguyenhuysl@gmail.com)

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In the mountainous Northwestern Vietnam province of Son La, education is gradually improving but still faces unique challenges. Localities not only face the problem of uneven educational infrastructure but also encounter social problems such as the populace's perceptions of investment in education, lack of resources and limitations in accessing education. In this context, the leadership and management capacity of high school administrators in Son La becomes one of the key factors determining change for the success of the local education system in the spirit of the National Assembly Resolution 29 on fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education [1].

The study addresses the question of the status of leadership and management capacity of high school administrators in Son La province. In addition, we are also concerned about the challenges that confront them, the strategies they adopt to overcome those challenges, and the impact of their decisions and actions on the quality of education and community development.

The research subject will be high school administrators in districts and cities in Son La province. We plan to use a multi-dimensional research method, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data and analyze results. This will help us have a comprehensive view of the leadership and management capacity of high school administrators in Son La.

This study is not only a reflection of the quality of education in Son La province, the experiences in management that contribute to creating changes in the local education system, but also as a valuable source of information for educational managers, research experts and those interested in education in disadvantaged areas of the mountainous Northwestern region. The results of the research will help them better understand the challenges and opportunities that high school administrators in Son La are facing, thereby proposing specific solutions to improve the quality of education and training while

strengthening their leadership and management capacity.

In this context, we hope that our research not only provides an understanding of education in the mountainous Northwestern region in Vietnam but also serves as a source of encouragement to build an educational future for millions of students in Son La, contributing to the sustainable development of Vietnam.

## **2. The Factors of Leadership and Management Capacity in High Schools**

Multiple factors contribute to a quality education such as: competent teaching staffs; moral values being upheld; good exam results; support from parents, businesses and local communities; diverse resources; application of technology; strong and purposeful leadership; care and concern to learners; a balanced and modern curriculum [2, 3].

In Vietnam, both the policy and academic fields are attentive about school management and leadership capacity. According to the Ministry of Education and Training's Circular No. 33/2005/TT-BGDĐT on December 8, 2005, high school management staff are those appointed to the positions of Principal, Vice Principal and Chief Specialist, who are responsible to state management agencies at all levels for the organization, management, and administration of the school's activities and educational quality [4]. Therefore, it is necessary to choose a principal with sufficient qualities, qualifications and management capacity in a dynamic, creative and effective manner to lead the school to carry out the tasks of education and training, especially teaching activities. As the head of the school, the principal has a decisive influence on all activities in the school. According to Tran et al. (2020), a variety of professional development strategies initiated by school leadership, including collaboration between teachers and motivations are utilized, resulting in significant improvements in teaching quality [5].

### 3. The Current Situation of Son La Province's High Schools

According to the statistical report at the beginning of the 2016 - 2017 school year of Son La province's Department of Education and Training, there are 1,905 administrators, teachers, and staff at the high school level in the province; including 105 managers, 1,517 teachers, and 275 employees. Level of training: 01 person have a doctoral degree; 169 people have master's degrees (accounting for 8.87% of the total number of the province's education personnel). 518 administrators, teachers, and employees are ethnic minorities (accounting for 27.19%), 1,135 teachers are female (accounting for 59.58%). 100% of management staff, teachers and staff have met training qualifications according to regulations [6].

By the beginning of the 2021 - 2022 school year, the total number of administrators, teachers, and staff at the high school level in Son La province is 1,834 people; including 121 managers (an increase of 16 people compared to 2016), 1,552 teachers (an increase of 35 people compared to 2016), and 161 employees (a decrease of 114 people compared to 2016). Level of training: 02 people with doctorate level; 286 people with master's degree (accounting for 15.59%, an increase of 6.72% compared to 2016). The number of administrators, teachers, and employees who are ethnic minorities is 462 people (accounting for 25.19%), 1,128 teachers are female (accounting for 61.5%). 100% of management staff, teachers and staff have met training qualifications according to regulations [7].

### 4. Research Methodology

#### 4.1. Research Goal

The research aims to assess the opinion of Son La province's high school administrators, teachers and staffs regarding the management capacity of the province's high school administrators.

#### 4.2. Research Sample

Survey questionnaires were sent to administrators, teachers, students and parents of 43 high schools and continuing education centers in Son La province. Specifically, the survey was sent to 150 managers, with 126 valid responses obtained, while 700 teachers were surveyed and 618 valid responses were obtained from this group, resulting in 744 valid responses.

#### 4.3. Data Analysis

A 5-point Likert scale was used in order. Questions based on the Likert scale helped quantify the degree to which each group of survey participants agreed or disagreed with the proposed statements and criteria. Thanks to that, this study provides a general and positive overview of the assessment of the quality of high school education in Son La province.

After the data is collected, it is analyzed and invalid votes were removed, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data. After that, valid data were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS software. The results of this analysis will help better understand the causes and difficulties affecting the quality of high school education in Son La province, thereby proposing measures to manage and develop the school system to improve the education quality in the future.

### 5. Research Result and Discussion

#### 5.1. Current Situation of Son La Province's School Management Capacity

The data in Table 1 shows that most respondents think that the number of administrators of schools in the province is sufficient (68.5%). Thus, in terms of subjective assessment, nearly 70% of respondents positively evaluated the number of managers in Son La province. Meanwhile, both "highly excessive" and "relatively excessive" groups only consists of a total of 2.5% of respondents while "Highly insufficient" and "Relatively insufficient" group account for a total of nearly

30% of respondents. Overall, most high school managers and teachers believed that the number

of managers of high schools in Son La province are either sufficient or insufficient.

Table 1. Assessment of administrators and teachers on the current number of administrators in high schools in Son La province

Evaluation of the number of managers of high schools	Number of responses	Percentage
Highly excessive	1	0.1
Highly insufficient	17	2.3
Relatively excessive	18	2.4
Relatively insufficient	198	26.6
Sufficient	510	68.5
Tổng	744	100.0

From Table 2, it is shown that more than 90% of respondents assess the leadership and management capacity of administrators of high schools in Son La province as “Proficient” or “Above average” with over 40% of respondents consider the managers “Proficient”. If “Proficient” or “Above average” leadership and management capacity are considered the minimum condition to be able to complete the functions and tasks as administrators, Son La province's high school administrators meet the requirements of their positions. This result also raises the issue of continuing to develop and foster leadership and management capacity for the province's education management staff, especially with more than 50% of respondents

assessed the capacity of the province's management staff to be at “Above average”. Meanwhile, less than 10% of respondents rated the education management capacity of the local education management officials as either “Average” or “Below average”, which is noteworthy and requires appropriate measures and policies to support and improve the capacity, skills, management and leadership knowledge for educational administrators of Son La province. As education is an important field in society, education managers are people of special importance with each decision made being directly related to the development of the young generations, many households as well as the wider society.

Table 2. Assessment of administrators and teachers on the leadership and management capacity of high school administrators

Evaluation of leadership and management capacity	Number of responses	Percentage
Proficient	300	40.3
Above average	375	50.4
Average	64	8.6
Below average	2	0.3
Insufficient	3	0.4
Total	744	100.0

The quality of the school management team is demonstrated in the leadership and management capacity of the management staff of Son La province high schools. The assessments of managers and teachers on this aspect is demonstrated through the gathered data in Table 3.

The data table of evaluated aspects shows that the administrators of high schools in Son La

province are highly appreciated by the administrators and teachers, with an overall average score of 4.26.

On a 5-level scale, this is the score in the 5th rating level, the highest level. That shows the level of trust and confidence of the respondents in the work results of school administrators in the survey area.

Table 3. Assessment of school management and leadership capacity of high school administrators

Evaluated criteria	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Understand correctly and fully the objectives, content requirements, methods,...	738	1	5	4.31	0.631
Master the subject you have taught or are currently teaching, and possess knowledge of other subjects	744	1	5	4.28	0.670
Able to design, organize, and direct the implementation of the school's teaching plans according to the 2006 and 2018 Programs	744	1	5	4.27	0.665
Capacity to operate and manage teaching and educational activities to implement two educational programs in 2006 and 2018 in the school	744	1	5	4.27	0.680
Ability to gather people with the goal of building a united and dynamic team while effectively utilize the established team	744	1	5	4.26	0.702
Be proficient in ethnic languages and apply information technology in expertise and management while connecting with the professional community and residential community	744	1	5	3.99	0.711
Ability to grasp, analyze and forecast the school's development trends; know how to improve, innovate and adapt to changing conditions	744	1	5	4.20	0.690
Ability to plan and arrange work appropriately to improve the school's educational quality	744	1	5	4.26	0.688
Ability to improve high school graduation exam results of school students	744	1	5	4.27	0.667
Ability to manage finances and assets of the school	744	1	5	4.30	0.703
Ability to operate, organize inspection, and evaluate the work of teachers and staff in the school	744	1	5	4.32	0.687
Implementing democracy in school activities	744	1	5	4.34	0.732
Understand and behave appropriately with the customs and practices of the local populace	744	2	5	4.28	0.703
Ability to organize and coordinate with students' families, communities, party committees and local authorities	744	2	5	4.31	0.686
Mobilize and utilize resources from family/community to develop the school	744	1	5	4.12	0.715
Coordinate with families/communities to mobilize students to go to school, especially ethnic minority students and border areas	744	1	5	4.23	0.702
Understand and implement the directive documents of superiors	744	1	5	4.40	0.678
Overall average score			4.26		

Among the criteria with the highest scores, that the group of contents related to mastering and implementing the directive documents of superiors (4.4) and implementing democracy in school activities (4.34), administrative capacity, organization, inspection, evaluation (4.32),... Such results in these aspects all speak to the most important qualities of managers and leaders in high schools. Thus, this result not only proves the capacity of managers in the province but also is the most important measure and aspect of leadership in other words, respondents highly appreciated the capacity and work results of high school administrators in the province, especially aspects related to organizational capacity, inspection, and mastery of guidelines from higher levels of educational management.

The two lowest scored criteria in Table 3 are "Using ethnic languages well and knowing how to apply information technology well in expertise, management, and connection" with the professional community and residential community" (3.99), "Mobilize and use resources from family/community to develop the school" (4.12). These criteria are more aligned with "soft skills" compared to the criteria with the highest GPA above. These aspects are sometimes not the most essential aspects of leadership management, but they greatly affect the success of school leaders. With the score for those criteria being the lowest, the province's Department of Education and Training are required to pay attention to fostering these specific qualities for high school administrators in the province.

In summary, from reviewing some aspects of the current situation of the education management staff of Son La province in aspects such as quantity, management capacity and management performance results, Son La province's education management staff are regarded as. In addition, management levels and the education sector in Son La province also need to pay attention to team development, to avoid the situation of insufficient numbers and inadequate management capacity to meet job

requirements. High school administrators in Son La province are highly appreciated for their mastery of professional knowledge as well as general policies of the education sector,... however, they also need to further develop skills related to ethnic languages and skills. information technology capabilities as well as mobilizing social resources in educational development.

## 5.2. Factors of the Improvement of High School Education Quality in Son La Province

### Objective Factors

i) Specific mechanisms and policies to improve professional quality, specifically the quality of management staff and teachers is not truly comprehensive, therefore not guaranteed to encourage and promote quality. Team and attract talented people to work in the education sector;

ii) In professional direction to improve high school graduation exam results: Many students in remote areas have limited basic knowledge, lack skills, motivation to study and diligence lead to weak ability to absorb knowledge and low results at high school graduation exams. Some organizations have not paid enough attention to exam contents for students and registering for subject groups on exams. There is also a lack of confidence in the ability to improve student quality, especially from Centers of Continuing Education and schools in highland and disadvantaged areas, which reduces the learning motivation and diligence of some students;

iii) The province's natural and social conditions have many unfavorable factors, causing difficulties in the development of education and training. The educational level of the population is not uniform, with many families in remote areas or areas with a high ethnic minority populace not having the conditions to pay due attention to education;

iv) While the Education and Training sector cooperates with provincial departments, unions and local governments in the province, the relevant content is not specific.

### Subjective Factors

i) A number of managers and teachers are not aware of personal awareness and

responsibility of improving the quality of professional work and seek only achievements, lacks dedication, works passively and perform tasks inefficiently. Discipline and order in some preschools and high schools are not strict, with some principals and school administrators have not been exemplary in performing their assigned duties and responsibilities. The professional capacity of a large number of administrators and teachers is still limited and cannot meet the requirements of improving teaching quality;

ii) Education management agencies do not have effective solutions to evaluate the capacity of managers and teachers, resulting in inefficient screening of incompetent managers and teachers. There are no strategies, plans and support policies to enhance training and improving capacity for managers and teachers;

iii) The educational management system has not focused on strict quality management and improving and enhancing the quality of high school education;

iv) There are no synchronous measures to promote innovation and enhance professional quality: The assignment of quality indicators is not linked to the output standards of the educational level; Standardized tests, objective assessments, scientific quality and student learning results according to common knowledge and skills standards (semester tests, quality surveys, admission,...) are lacking; The results of improving and enhancing the quality of education have not been determined as the key criteria for evaluating schools, principals, and teachers in considering emulation and rewards; not proactive and active in consulting with Party Committees and local authorities on policies, measures and solutions to improve and improve quality; Lack of synchronus coordination with organizations both within the school (Trade Union, Youth Union,...) and outside the school (Study Promotion Association, Youth Union, Women's Union,...), parents' association and students, which hinders both establishing a consensus and gather resources that can promote innovation and improve teaching quality and sustainability.

v) Formally assigning quality indicators based on percentages without a mechanism to truly control and evaluate quality according to knowledge and skill standards leads to thoughts and actions that are driven by achievement. has existed for a long time and is quite popular in the education industry;

vi) The handover and acceptance of the quality of education implementation have not been effective, heavily formalized, and there are no effective handover tools and techniques;

vii) Some high school units and continuing education centers still have limitations in terms of planning and implementation in terms of management, direction of teaching and learning, review, exam preparation and exam registration. Inspection and supervision of plan implementation are not thorough, leading to low exam results compared to actual capacity;

viii) Some teachers do not implement effective solutions in reviewing and managing students, so there are still students with bad grades and failing to graduate;

ix) Emulation and reward work is not linked to substantive evaluation and quality control;

x) The above situation of educational quality reflects ineffectiveness in professional quality management, leading to low educational efficiency and waste of funds and human resources. Professional work is key and decisive in improving the quality of education. Thus, the urgent issue is the need to improve the quality of professional direction and deployment in the province.

## **6. Conclusion**

The results of the study have shown that high school administrators in Son La are facing a diverse array of challenges. These challenges come not only from within the education system such as lack of resources and poor infrastructure, but also from external factors such as local culture and social factors. However, we have also seen the creativity and commitment of management staff, their continuous efforts to improve the situation and enhance the quality of education.

We encourage investment in leadership training and development, facilitating innovation and creativity in educational management. In addition, strengthening cooperation between high schools, local governments and social organizations can create a common learning and development environment, helping to repel challenges and maximize opportunities.

In the future, educational managers in Son La and surrounding areas are recommended to apply flexible leadership principles, encouraging creativity and the ability to adapt to changes. At the same time, building a leadership and management capacity assessment system will help them self-assess and improve their abilities, thereby ensuring that education in Son La not only meets basic requirements, but also encourages creative thinking and comprehensive development of students.

In conclusion, we hope that this research will not only be a scientific report but also as a motivation factor that encourages interdisciplinary collaboration to build a strong, innovative and fair education system in Son La province. We believe that the continuous efforts of high school administrators and the support of the community will be the key to achieve a bright future for education and development of Son La province.

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