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## ENHANCING MANAGEMENT CAPACITY OF TEACHING ACTIVITIES FOR SUBJECT HEADTEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOLLOWING A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

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### Abstract

This study aims to improve the management capacity of teaching activities for subject headteachers in primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic students through a competency-based approach, thereby contributing to enhancing the quality of teaching activities following this approach. The research has developed steps and procedures to enhance the management capacity of teaching activities for subject headteachers in primary schools, including: Identifying the basis for constructing the school's educational plan; Assessing the situation and conditions for implementing the curriculum during the academic year (with a focus on analyzing and evaluating the economic, cultural, and social aspects impacting the school's educational activities, identifying advantages and challenges); Determining the educational goals of the school; Developing a plan for organizing teaching various subjects and educational activities following a competency-based approach that suits the psychological characteristics of S'Tiêng ethnic students.

**Keywords:** *teaching capacity; primary school teachers; subject headteachers; primary school students; competency-based approach*

### Introduction

The S'Tiêng ethnic group is one of the 53 minority groups in Vietnam. They are indigenous to the Southeast region, with a population of over 90.000 people (ranking fifth among minority groups) residing predominantly in Bình Phước, Đồng Nai, and Tây Ninh provinces. The vast majority, approximately 88.425 individuals (constituting about 95.6% of the total), reside in Bình Phước. In Bình Phước province alone, there

are 10.215 S'Tiêng ethnic primary school students, accounting for 49.6% of the total ethnic minority students in the province. Compared to students of other minority groups, the educational quality of S'Tiêng ethnic students, encompassing knowledge, skills, and overall competency development, is significantly lower and considerably inferior to the mainstream standard. Enhancing the quality of teaching activities in primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic students is imperative to en-

sure educational equality for these students, both presently and in the future.

### **Result Research**

#### ***Task Assignment***

At the beginning of the academic year, the principal assigns tasks to each school staff member, disseminating objectives and regulations regarding expertise. Additionally, they guide the pedagogical team to review previously conducted activities, study and discuss the drafts of new tasks for the academic year in line with establishing the basis for the school's educational plan. This includes evaluating the program's implementation status within the academic year, focusing on analyzing and assessing the economic, cultural, and social conditions influencing the school's educational activities, highlighting advantages and challenges. Defining the school's educational goals and constructing a plan to organize teaching various subjects and educational activities based on a competency-based approach that suits the psychological characteristics of S'Tiêng ethnic students. The principal delegates tasks to vice-principals, overseeing the units, subject headteachers, and teachers responsible for specific content areas. They are tasked with sourcing authoritative materials to form the foundation for the school's contemporary educational plan, aligning it with the local situation, thoroughly studying the Ministry of Education's teaching guides, and exploring the curriculum framework at different educational levels. This includes dissecting lesson content in textbooks for each subject to determine appropriate teaching content.

The principal guides subject headteachers to collaborate with teachers to identify topics or lessons requiring adjustments or supplements if necessary. This coordination ensures consistency in constructing teaching plans within subject departments, facilitating favorable conditions for teachers in executing planned teaching activities. Moreover, it involves monitoring, inspecting, assessing, and proposing adjustments and supplementary measures fitting for an appropriate teaching plan.

Developing the teaching plan must align with each grade level, relying on the psychological characteristics of S'Tiêng ethnic

primary school students. The teaching plan should precisely outline the developmental objectives, required criteria, alignment with each grade's curriculum, specific content strands, knowledge, study themes, competency requirements, time allocations, examination and evaluation criteria for each subject. Additionally, it involves exploring study themes, lessons, time allocations for subjects, supplementary study materials, and linguistic resources found in textbooks used at the school to create an integrated plan, making adjustments, supplements in the teaching activity organization process.

#### ***Directing and Guiding Teachers in Designing Lessons through a Competency-Based Approach***

Developing a teaching plan using a competency-based approach for students' capabilities should follow the following procedure:

Step 1: Understanding the curriculum and textbooks.

Step 2: Identifying general competencies and specific capabilities that need to be developed in S'Tiêng ethnic students.

Step 3: Determining a system of study tasks and learning actions that students need to perform for each lesson or subject topic.

Step 4: Selecting appropriate methods and forms to organize teaching to implement these study tasks and learning actions for students.

Step 5: Choosing methods and forms to evaluate the results of performing study tasks and learning actions during teaching activities. Step 6: Developing subject-specific teaching plans.

#### ***Directing Subject Departments to Support Teachers in Diversifying Teaching Methods via a Competency-Based Approach***

The principal directs subject headteachers to focus on supporting teachers in flexibly selecting and using traditional teaching methods alongside subject-specific teaching methods during the teaching process. This ensures the principle that students autonomously complete learning tasks with teacher-guided organization, aiding students in enhancing their proactive and positive learning attitudes. This aims to foster increased interaction and communication between teachers and students.

Guiding teachers to innovate teaching methods and forms according to the competency-based approach for S'Tiêng ethnic students involves revamping traditional teaching methods. This is achieved by ensuring teachers grasp the requirements and adeptly use techniques in preparation and lesson delivery. Teachers should identify unique approaches to improve teaching methods and their personal experiences, specifically within each subject of the 2018 general education curriculum. In addition to combining traditional teaching methods and positively developing students' competencies, teachers must flexibly exploit specific teaching methods for each subject.

Through specialized activities such as workshops, extracurricular activities, the principal directs subject headteachers to assess and evaluate teachers' implementation of innovative principles in teaching according to the competency-based approach for students' capabilities. Simultaneously, they recommend to the principal the acknowledgment and reward of pioneering teachers who innovate in teaching methods towards developing students' competencies. This recognition could include commendations, early salary increments, and proposing advancement plans.

***Teachers organize teaching methods and forms in elementary schools according to a competency-based approach.***

Requirements for teaching methods and organizational forms based on student competency approaches:

In teaching based on student competency approaches, teaching methods and organizational forms play a crucial role. However, for these methods and forms to effectively fulfill their roles, they themselves must be positive teaching methods and organizational forms with high potential to enhance students' initiative, creativity, and application of knowledge and skills; focusing on teaching how to learn, how to think, encouraging self-learning, creating the basis for students to self-update and innovate knowledge and skills, and develop competencies; organizing diverse learning forms; paying attention to social activities, extracurricular activities, and scientific research. Positive teaching methods

and organizational forms based on student competency approaches in teaching based on student competency approaches require the application of the following teaching methods and organizational forms:

Regarding teaching methods, more attention is given to group discussion, problem-solving, project-based learning, etc., along with active teaching techniques.

Regarding the organizational forms of teaching, in addition to classroom teaching, more attention is given to social activities, extracurricular activities, scientific research, etc.

In the teaching process, the application of positive teaching methods and organizational forms based on student competency approaches needs to be carried out through a process that includes the following steps:

Step 1: Study the lesson content. The purpose of understanding the lesson content is to determine how the lesson contributes to the development of student competencies. And to develop student competencies, how should the lesson be "restructured"?

Step 2: Understand the differences in competencies and learning styles of students. Each student learns and develops through their own abilities and learning styles. Therefore, there are differences among them in terms of competencies and learning styles. This difference requires teachers, when using teaching methods and organizational forms, to "individualize".

Step 3: Survey the teaching conditions of the school. Teaching conditions not only affect the quality of education but also affect the application of teaching methods and organizational forms, especially positive teaching methods and organizational forms. Therefore, before deciding on which teaching methods and organizational forms to apply for a lesson, teachers need to understand the school's material resources, teaching equipment, and whether they ensure the organization of activities for teaching based on student competency approaches.

Step 4: Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher in applying teaching methods and organizational forms. Strengths and weaknesses are general aspects of a teacher's pedagogical skills, especially in applying teaching methods and organizational forms.

For each teacher, the application of teaching methods and organizational forms might be advantageous in one aspect but limiting in another. Therefore, teachers need to consider their strengths and weaknesses in applying teaching methods and organizational forms to achieve the highest teaching efficiency.

Step 5: Implement teaching methods and organizational forms. After step 4, teachers have selected suitable teaching methods and organizational forms. In this step, teachers implement the chosen teaching methods and organizational forms in organizing teaching activities. Regardless of how teaching methods and organizational forms are chosen and implemented, they must meet the requirements for developing student competencies.

#### ***Directing teachers to diversify forms of organizing teaching based on competency approach***

The principal guides subject departments and teachers to organize classes in a flexible and creative manner for students during theoretical lessons while conducting practical sessions, thereby providing ample opportunities for students to practice communication skills and utilize Vietnamese vocabulary learned across subjects.

Through seminars, workshops, and professional activities, the principal needs to introduce to teachers the integration of various forms and methods of teaching organization that are effective in fostering students' active learning during knowledge absorption, ensuring all students engage in practice, support each other, and gradually become familiar with collaborative work styles.

#### ***Directing subject departments and teachers to choose designing assessment tools for evaluating learning outcomes according to the competency-based approach.***

The principal directs vice-principals, heads of subject departments, and teachers to develop specific, explicit, and measurable assessment tools. These tools must comprehensively reflect all examination contents. Simultaneously, guide the formulation of assessments aligned with competency frameworks and matrices, ensuring differentiation among students such as recognition, comprehension, application, and higher-order applications.

Direct teachers to enhance collaborative use of diverse assessment methods and forms. Develop a variety of assessments (written, practical, individual, group, etc.) for teachers to implement throughout the teaching process, ensuring alignment with competency frameworks and matrices and facilitating student differentiation.

The principal organizes an assessment of the management's implementation of evaluation and testing based on an analysis of the measured results to compare the implementation's suitability with the established standards and criteria for three purposes: (1) affirming the level of achievement or non-achievement of students in terms of competency development, learning skills, and value orientation compared to learning objectives; (2) stimulating and fostering students' positive, proactive, creative attitudes along with their efforts to strive for comprehensive development of abilities and qualities; (3) extracting lessons and serving as a basis to adjust plans and effectively execute the principal's management function, while praising teachers who perform well and providing reminders and criticism to individuals who have not performed as expected.

#### ***Enhancing the managerial capacity for teaching activities using a competency-based approach for the specialized group of primary school headteachers catering to S'Tiêng ethnic minority students***

Clear objectives are established to elevate the managerial capacity in teaching activities, employing a competency-based approach for primary school managerial staff. Initially, the training goals for teachers in primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic minority students in Bình Phước province must align with the general objectives of regular teacher training. This aims to update knowledge on political, socio-economic aspects, cultivate political integrity, professional ethics, develop teaching abilities, educational competence, and other required skills outlined by the teaching profession standards, academic year tasks, grade-level requirements, local educational development demands, innovation, and education quality enhancement. It focuses on enhancing teachers' self-learning and self-improvement abilities, self-assess-

ment skills for regular training effectiveness, organizing and managing self-learning and self-improvement activities for teachers within schools, educational departments, and the education authorities.

Additionally, the training objectives for teachers in primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic minority students in Bình Phước province aim to meet the learning outcomes for S'Tiêng ethnic minority students. These encompass essential competencies and qualities necessary for teachers not only to fulfill their teaching duties effectively but also to assume the roles of educationalists and independent educational researchers. Teachers should be adept at resolving issues arising from the practical aspects of teaching at schools with S'Tiêng ethnic minority students. They must adapt readily to changing requirements and the evolution of education roles in modern society. Teachers in primary schools need training in S'Tiêng language, handwriting, oral communication, cultural traditions, customs, psychological characteristics, etc., of the S'Tiêng ethnic group.

Implementing training for teaching S'Tiêng language as an elective subject following the 2018 general education curriculum, comprising 70 periods per year per class. Primarily, this involves training teachers of S'Tiêng ethnic background and those familiar with the S'Tiêng language to teach it in primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic minority students. This is regarded as an optimal solution to significantly enhance the quality of education in such schools.

Organizing the development of a program to enhance the managerial capacity in teaching activities, using a competency-based approach targeting students' capacities for primary school managerial staff. The content of the teacher training program aligns closely with the regular training program outlined by the Ministry of Education and Training, tailored to meet the teaching needs in primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic minority students.

The program content is structured as follows:

**Training Content 01:** Updating professional knowledge to fulfill the academic year's tasks for primary schools nationwide. The Ministry of Education and Training specifies

annual training content regarding educational principles, policies, primary education development, primary education curriculum, subject knowledge, and primary education activities.

**Training Content 02:** Updating knowledge, skills, and practices in developing general education concerning local contexts over different periods.

The Provincial Department of Education and Training specifies annual training content regarding local educational development, provincial educational programs, and local educational curriculum. Special emphasis is placed on strengthening subject knowledge focusing on weaker areas in teaching at primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic minority students.

**Training Content 03:** Developing professional competencies to meet job requirements, practical skills, and specialized knowledge.

The Provincial Department of Education and Training directs educational offices, schools, and primary schools to guide teachers in selecting modules for professional development, aligning with job requirements, practical skills, and specialized knowledge to identify and solve emerging issues in daily life and educational practice, especially in primary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic minority students.

**Training Methodology:** The training method should be engaging, flexible, suitable, guiding teachers to actively and creatively participate in learning. It should focus on teachers' activities with the principle of "self-study and self-improvement first". Instructors need to relate theories to practical applications, use teaching situations to enhance problem-solving skills, diversify teaching methods tailored specifically to the training process. Instructors should present what teachers need and what they cannot accomplish yet. As training is also a form of learning, its essence lies in active learning, not through words or phrases; learners learn through experiences gained in practice. Instructors should enhance the application of acquired knowledge. Learners need help in bridging the gap between theory and application, which the instructors can provide. Emphasis should be placed on practical applica-

tion within the training method, encouraging active participation, focusing on individual self-improvement activities, with exchange and discussion within specialized groups centering on learning content and presented scenarios.

The process of enhancing the managerial capacity in teaching activities using a competency-based approach for primary school managerial staff involves the following steps:

Step 1: Distribute training materials, provide preliminary guidance to managerial staff on the training content, particularly focusing on new or challenging sections; pose questions/tasks that need to be completed. Step 2: Allow primary school managerial staff to independently study the training materials. Step 3: Organize group discussions among primary school managerial staff (including staff from various schools), where representatives present the group's findings before the larger audience. Step 4: Address challenging points from the materials, unclear or differing content that the managerial staff has identified through self-study and discussions, debates. Step 5: Conduct Q&A sessions, supplement knowledge and skills to deepen the understanding of the materials for the primary school staff.

**Training Formats:** Each school needs to develop various training formats ensuring diversity and richness, allowing teachers to choose suitable forms. Based on objectives, planning, and determining training content (professional standards, innovative teaching methods, elementary student evaluation innovation, Vietnamese language preparation for ethnic minority students, organizing experiential activities for students, etc.), educational management levels and teachers identify corresponding training methods such as focused training, regular specialized activities based on topics, self-improvement, etc.

**Concentrated training:** Organize experiences for teachers to participate voluntarily and actively (individual activities, pair or group discussions, practical applications, emphasizing the exploitation of teaching experiences). The facilitator serves as an organizer, posing issues, guiding, managing, concluding, and providing necessary assistance and support to teachers or groups when needed.

Regular training through specialized activities in lesson planning, observations, feedback, and adjustments in teaching to enable self-directed student learning. These activities can include collaborative learning, conducted through cluster meetings among primary schools or departmental-level professional gatherings. Self-improvement through reference materials, online lectures, television, the internet, etc.

### ***Evaluating the Results of Enhancing Teaching Activity Management Capability using a Competency-based Approach for Elementary School Management Staff***

The significance of an assessment only truly comes into play when the evaluator (instructor) is able to assess the target (teacher), and the learner is able to self-assess. This means that the assessment is only meaningful when both the instructor and the teacher evaluate post-assessment. If it stops at mere grading or marking, the assessment and evaluation lack innovation as they don't drive adjustments in the adaptability, attitudes, and teaching approaches of the teacher. Evaluating the results of training involves:

Teachers grasping the content of the knowledge and skills they have been trained on.

Teachers applying this knowledge and these skills to resolve practical situations in teaching and in life.

The quality of students' learning and development after their teachers have been trained.

Teacher training is closely related to the primary duty of educators, which is enhancing the quality of teaching. Therefore, school administrators should use the results of training as one of the criteria to evaluate whether teachers have fulfilled their duties or not. This helps teachers identify their learning progress accurately. Incorporating training completion into the evaluation criteria encourages teacher development, classification during each semester or academic year.

### ***Directing the Enhancement of Information Technology Application in Teaching towards Competency Development***

The application of information technology has become a natural requirement for both teachers and students in the teaching

and learning processes, particularly in the competency-based teaching approach. Through the use of modern teaching devices and information technology, teachers develop necessary skills to proficiently use modern teaching tools. The application of information technology in teaching, such as electronic lessons, incorporates vivid sounds and images, making lessons more engaging and facilitating easier comprehension for students. It ensures an improvement in self-learning abilities, fosters positive thinking among learners, while providing teachers opportunities for self-improvement, quick information updates, and meeting the demand for innovative teaching methods.

To effectively guide the use of information technology in teaching, principals need to perform the following tasks:

Develop a strategic plan to build information technology infrastructure (purchasing new computers, installing multiple multimedia rooms, providing projectors, audiovisual equipment, upgrading internet connectivity with Wi-Fi, creating websites, etc.).

Mobilize resources from education privatization to enhance the purchase of new information technology equipment to serve teaching activities based on competency-based learning.

Direct the reinforcement of information technology application into teaching and

learning processes for each specialized department and individual teachers.

Organize training for the team of specialized department heads and teachers in computer literacy and the use of software to design electronic lessons, organize educational games through supporting software, and teaching topics supported by information technology to help teachers learn and gain experience in implementing a lesson to maximize students' competency.

### Conclusion

Enhancing the teaching activity management of the specialized department heads through a competency-based approach is necessary to achieve the set educational goals, which require the development of a general plan for schools. The trial results of the measure "Enhancing Teaching Activity Management Capability using a Competency-based Approach for the specialized department heads in elementary schools with S'Tiêng ethnic students" demonstrate that this approach is suitable for the practicalities of schools with S'Tiêng ethnic students and highly effective for managing teaching activities. It reaffirms the scientific and precise nature of the proposed measure that is aligned with the specific characteristics of schools with S'Tiêng ethnic students.

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