



## Section 3. Higher professionan education

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### DEVELOPING COMPETENCE IN MANAGING CHANGES IN TEACHING ACTIVITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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#### Abstract

The principal plays an important role in school reform in general and in managing changes in teaching activities in particular. To effectively fulfill the role of captain, leader, and strategic navigator of teaching change, principals must possess competencies in managing changes in teaching activities. Based on Fullan's change management model, the research team identified three core competencies and fifteen component competencies that high school principals need to manage changes in teaching activities. From there, the team also proposed four measures to foster these management competencies for high school principals.

**Keywords:** *Change, teaching activities, management, managing change in teaching activities, principal*

#### 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, many international studies have focused on the role of principals in leading changes in teaching activities. A common feature of these works is the examination of the actual management of change in high schools across various countries, from which they derive conclusions and propose measures to strengthen the principal's role. Acton (2021) investigated the perceptions of experienced principals regarding their readiness to become change agents. The findings showed that most principals had not received formal training in change leadership but had learned primarily

ly through professional experience and peer exchange. This created a knowledge gap in understanding and managing the process of teaching change. Principals believed that reforms would be more successful if responsibility was shared by higher management levels. Therefore, the experiences of seasoned principals should be disseminated to improve school change management. Molefhi & Pheko (2023), in their study in Botswana, emphasized that principals play a central role in implementing effective management systems for teaching activities. They must communicate vision, motivate teachers, address challenges, and ensure that systems align

with the school's mission. However, implementation faces difficulties related to culture, teaching philosophy, facilities, and technological infrastructure. Thus, principals need suitable skills, knowledge, and attitudes to lead change effectively, while being aware of the benefits, limitations, risks, and opportunities that such systems entail. Other studies by Michael & Newton (2008), Woolner (2014), and Morrison & Cooper (2015) also confirmed that principals are decisive factors in leading changes in curricula, methods, and teaching forms. The authors suggested that principals should design change plans linked with the school's mission, consult widely, adopt a student-centered approach, inspire innovation in teachers and students, encourage creative solutions, and regularly assess and adjust the change process.

In Vietnam, research by Nguyễn Thị Thúy Dung (2018), Nguyễn Long Giao (2021), and Nguyễn Văn Nguyễn (2023) emphasized that principals are the main actors in change management, expressed through functions such as forecasting, planning, organizing, evaluating, and adjusting. Principals need qualities such as adaptability, innovation, pioneering spirit, decisiveness, persistence, responsibility, ambition, and humility. In terms of skills, they must analyze contexts, identify and prioritize changes, make concrete plans, build relationships, persuade and motivate, communicate and train, work in teams, solve problems, mobilize resources, evaluate, and sustain outcomes.

From these studies, it can be seen that principals play a pivotal role in managing changes in teaching activities. To succeed, they need to be equipped with competencies in change management, including knowledge, skills, and personal attributes. This is also the focus of this study, which aims to propose measures for developing competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high school principals in Vietnam.

## 2. Research Methods

In this study, the authors employed several theoretical research methods:

*Document collection* using keywords such as “change,” “change management,” “managing changes in teaching activities,” and “competence in managing changes in teach-

ing activities” to search databases such as ResearchGate, Google Scholar, and JSTOR.

*Document evaluation* based on criteria including type of document (books, articles, theses), type of research (theoretical or empirical), and year of publication.

*Analysis and synthesis* of all collected information, generalizing independent findings to identify the competencies required for managing changes in teaching activities by principals, and proposing measures for developing these competencies among high school principals.

## 3. Research Results

### 3.1. Competencies in managing changes in teaching activities that need to be developed for high school principals

Developing competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high school principals is crucial in the current context of comprehensive educational reform. The research team drew on Fullan's (2006) change management model, which includes three stages: **Initiation – Implementation – Institutionalization**. Each stage requires principals to possess specific management competencies to successfully lead schools through improvements in teaching activities.

#### 3.1.1. Competencies in managing the initiation stage of change

Initiation lays the foundation, creating consensus and preparing teachers, students, and the school community for change. At this stage, principals need to:

*Initiate the direction of change:* Principals act as “pathfinders,” clearly defining directions for improvement – for example, shifting from knowledge transmission to competency-based teaching, applying information technology, encouraging experiential learning and critical thinking. The key is to engage the school community in sharing the vision, fostering participation rather than imposing mandates.

*Organize communication:* Sustainable change requires thorough communication. Principals must employ diverse channels such as meetings, emails, newsletters, and guidelines so that teachers fully understand the rationale, goals, and direction. Communication must be coupled with explanation

and listening to address concerns, thereby building trust.

*Create a sense of urgency:* Change occurs only when people perceive it as necessary. According to Luckin (2016), emotions play a key role in decisions about change. Principals must help teachers recognize urgency, see the benefits, and build motivation and confidence in reform. At the same time, supportive environments should be created to minimize psychological barriers.

*Mobilize subject groups and core teachers:* These groups form the backbone of preparation. Principals must assign responsibilities clearly and encourage them to participate in designing and disseminating innovations throughout the school.

*Develop an action plan:* A plan serves as the roadmap for change, including context analysis, goal setting, resource planning, action program design, and official promulgation. A good plan ensures proactive resource use and allows flexible monitoring and adjustment.

*Foster an innovation spirit:* Principals should directly model new teaching methods, join training sessions and workshops, and inspire teachers. Through concrete actions, innovation is spread, encouraging whole-school participation.

### 3.1.2. Competencies in Managing the Implementation Stage of Change

In this stage, the main tasks are organizing, monitoring, and supporting so that change becomes a reality in teaching practice. Required competencies include:

*Clear assignment of responsibilities:* Teachers directly innovate teaching methods, while subject groups provide support. Principals must assign specific tasks, helping teachers understand objectives, take initiative in researching and applying new methods, and clarify the advisory and professional development roles of subject groups.

*Monitor progress with concrete tools:* Teaching reform must be tracked with detailed plans and modern management tools such as LMS, classroom management software, and online assessments. Continuous monitoring allows timely adjustments, replication of effective models, and prevention of deviations.

*Provide support and professional consultation:* Teachers often face challenges when

adopting new practices. Principals should organize training on active teaching methods, competency-based assessment techniques, and technology applications, while offering individual consultation (in person or online) and providing learning materials and guidelines.

*Feedback and plan adjustment:* When teachers face difficulties, principals must observe, listen, provide concrete feedback, identify strengths and weaknesses, and suggest feasible solutions. Plans must then be promptly and flexibly adjusted to suit real situations.

*Create opportunities for sharing initiatives:* Teacher creativity is a valuable resource. Principals should encourage the sharing of experiences through workshops, professional meetings, class observations, or online forums. This not only enhances reform effectiveness but also builds a professional and collaborative working environment.

### 3.1.3. Competencies in managing the institutionalization stage of change

Institutionalization is the final step, ensuring sustainability and scaling up achieved results, turning innovation into routine practice. At this stage, principals need to:

*Develop strategies for sustaining and expanding results:* Without a strategy, reforms can easily revert to the original state (Champlain College, 2022). Principals must clearly define long-term goals, directions, resources, and specific actions to ensure sustainability.

*Integrate reforms into regulations and evaluation criteria:* Changes must be included in official regulations to guarantee compliance and consistency. Principals should update regulations, add provisions regarding innovative methods, assessments, and teacher responsibilities/rights, and develop internal evaluation criteria that reflect new standards.

*Build a school culture that encourages creativity:* Culture is the fertile ground for innovation to take root. Principals must create a friendly, open environment, acknowledge contributions, and encourage autonomy and creativity. At the same time, they should motivate teachers to keep learning and improving.

*Maintain a continuous innovation environment:* Reform is not a short-term event but a long-term process. Principals must pro-

vide resources, tools, professional activities, and mechanisms for incentives and rewards. Regular dialogue and timely feedback foster continuous improvement and enhance teaching quality.

### **3.2. Measures for developing competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high school principals**

#### **Measure 1. Define the objectives of developing competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high school principals**

The objective is to enable principals to analyze and evaluate the current situation, identify the right problems to change, and build flexible, focused plans for change. Principals should also create supportive environments and motivation for teachers, foster teacher initiative, ensure democratic governance, mobilize stakeholder participation, and strengthen leadership and management capacity in teaching, thereby contributing to the successful implementation of the 2018 General Education Curriculum. To set such objectives, training providers must grasp the theoretical and practical foundations of managing changes in teaching activities and accurately analyze and evaluate the current state of schools.

#### **Measure 2. Develop training content for competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high school principals**

*Knowledge of managing changes in teaching activities at high schools:* Principals should be trained in knowledge relevant to each stage. In the initiation stage, this includes knowledge about starting change directions, communicating reasons, goals, and orientations, creating urgency, persuading teachers of the necessity of change, and developing action plans. In the implementation stage, principals need knowledge of monitoring progress with plans and tools, supporting and advising teachers, providing timely feedback, adjusting plans, and creating opportunities for sharing initiatives and experiences. In the institutionalization stage, principals need knowledge of building strategies for sustaining and expanding results, integrating reforms into regulations and evaluation criteria, building a creative

school culture, and maintaining an environment that encourages continuous innovation in methods, assessment, and content to meet new educational objectives.

*Skills in managing changes in teaching activities at high schools:* Principals should also be trained in skills corresponding to each stage. In the initiation stage, these include skills in starting change directions, communicating reasons, goals, and orientations, creating urgency, persuading teachers, and developing action plans. In the implementation stage, principals need skills in monitoring progress with plans and tools, providing professional support, offering timely feedback, adjusting plans, and creating opportunities for sharing initiatives. In the **institutionalization stage**, principals need skills in building strategies for sustaining and expanding results, integrating reforms into regulations and evaluation criteria, building a school culture that encourages creativity, and maintaining an environment that fosters continuous innovation in teaching methods, assessment, and learning content.

#### **Measure 3. Combine methods of developing competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high school principals**

In many countries around the world, the professional development of educational managers in general, and high school principals in particular, is often carried out through the following methods:

*Expert-centered method:* In this approach, experts provide knowledge and experience, while principals receive and apply them.

*Learner-centered method:* Here, principals independently implement the training program with the support of facilitators.

*Media-centered method:* In this case, information and communication technologies are used to deliver training content to principals.

Each of these methods has its own strengths and limitations. Therefore, in developing competencies for managing changes in teaching activities, it is necessary to combine all three approaches.

#### **Measure 4. Evaluate the development of competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high**



### ***school principals through a systematic process***

The evaluation process consists of the following steps:

*Step 1. Define evaluation objectives.* The goal is to determine the extent to which principals have achieved knowledge and skills in managing changes in teaching activities, and how these have been transformed into actual competencies.

*Step 2. Select evaluation methods and forms.* A combination of traditional and non-traditional methods should be employed, ensuring appropriateness for assessing outcomes in developing principals' competencies in managing teaching changes.

*Step 3. Conduct the evaluation.* This requires developing clear and specific evaluation criteria and using appropriate evaluation tools.

*Step 4. Process evaluation results.* Results should be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively to determine the level of competency development achieved by principals.

*Step 5. Provide feedback to trainees and stakeholders.* Information on both the

training process and outcomes should be shared with principals and relevant stakeholders, enabling necessary adjustments in content, methods, and forms of professional development.

### **4. Conclusion**

In high schools, the principal is the captain, leader, and strategic navigator of reform – creating supportive environments, inspiring teachers, supervising implementation, and providing timely evaluation and adjustments to ensure the success of school innovation in general and teaching activities in particular. To fully realize this role, principals must possess competencies in managing changes in teaching activities. Based on Fullan's change management model, the research team identified three core competencies (managing the initiation stage, managing the implementation stage, and managing the institutionalization stage) along with fifteen component competencies. From this foundation, four measures were proposed to develop competencies in managing changes in teaching activities for high school principals.

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