

Current Status of Commune-Level Leadership Cadres and Activities for Enhancing the Capacity of Commune-Level Leadership Cadres in Thai Nguyen Province, VietNam

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Abstract— Thai Nguyen is one of the regional centers of the midland and mountainous provinces in the North of Vietnam. Thai Nguyen Province comprises 9 administrative units, including 3 cities (Thai Nguyen city, Song Cong city, Pho Yen city) and 6 districts (Phu Binh, Dong Hy, Vo Nhai, Dinh Hoa, Dai Tu, Phu Luong) with 177 commune-level administrative units, consisting of 126 communes, 41 wards, and 10 towns. The cadre of commune-level leaders in Thai Nguyen Province is currently fewer than the prescribed number (due to one person holding multiple positions). However, in recent times, the number of commune-level officials and civil servants has increased rapidly, significantly affecting the effectiveness of commune-level government operations. This article focuses on reflecting the current situation of commune-level cadres and the activities of enhancing the capacity of commune-level leaders in Thai Nguyen Province.

Keywords— Leadership, Official, Commune level, Training, Enhance, Capacity.

I. INTRODUCTION

With its advantageous geographical location and abundant natural resources, Thai Nguyen province is actively enhancing investment attraction, mobilizing social resources, and diversifying investment forms. The province is implementing numerous key projects and important public investment projects. Thai Nguyen is among the provinces quickly approved by the Prime Minister for its provincial planning for the period 2021-2030, with a vision towards 2050. This plan identifies "maximizing the human factor, considering people as the center, the main subject, the most important resource, and the goal of development." "Focusing on investment, improving the quality of human resources, and developing education and training as the foundation for sustainable, long-term development; creating a fundamental shift in training and attracting high-quality human resources" [1].

To capitalize on potential and advantages and successfully achieve the province's development goals in the coming time, the crucial priority is to effectively manage cadres, building a strong team of officials, especially key leaders at all levels. On July 15, 2021, the Executive Committee of the Thai Nguyen Provincial Party issued Resolution No. 08-DA/TU on "Improving the Quality of Cadres, Particularly Leadership and Management Officials, and Key Cadres at All Levels to Ensure Capability and Integrity to Meet the Requirements of the New Situation". Regarding the positions of commune-level leadership (party committee, government), this includes 06 key leadership roles: Secretary of the Party Committee, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee, Chairman of the People's Council, Vice Chairman of the People's Council, Chairman of the People's Committee, and Vice Chairman of the People's Committee [2].

Implementing the project, in recent years, under the direction of the leadership of Thai Nguyen Province in promoting the training and development of officials, the commune-level officials and civil servants in the province have progressively improved in both quantity and quality. The political integrity, professional competence, administrative skills, leadership abilities, and task management have been gradually enhanced. They have developed a sense of organizational discipline, team spirit, responsibility in their work, and a determination to overcome difficulties to fulfill assigned tasks, significantly contributing to the successful implementation of local political objectives. However, the level, quality, and capacity of the commune-level leadership in Thai Nguyen Province still face certain limitations that need to be addressed.

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

In terms of quantity: As of December 31, 2023, according to regulations for the 177 communes, wards, and towns in Thai Nguyen province, there should be a corresponding number of individuals assigned to each key leadership position. However, the specific numbers are as follows:

TABLE I. THE NUMBER OF COMMUNE-LEVEL OFFICIALS IN THAI NGUYEN PROVINCE (AS OF 12/31/2023)

| Position | Assigned Quota | Current Number |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Secretary of the Party Committee | 177 | 174 |
| Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee | 177 | 175 |
| Chairman of the People's Council | 177 | 09 |
| Vice Chairman of the People's Council | 177 | 174 |
| Chairman of the People's Committee | 177 | 171 |
| Vice Chairman of the People's Committee | 313 | 294 |

(Source: Survey data by the author)

Thus, the commune-level leadership officials in Thai Nguyen Province, although currently fewer in number than assigned (due to individuals holding multiple positions), still pose a challenge in implementing the policy of streamlining the administrative apparatus. The goal of building a team of officials and civil servants with an adequate, rational, professional, and modern structure has not been achieved as desired.

Regarding quality and professional competence: Generally, it is still low compared to the overall level of leadership officials at various levels. The number of commune-level leaders with professional qualifications such as Doctorate and Master's degrees is limited (with only one Doctorate holder); those with University and College degrees make up a large proportion (over 90%). Additionally, the fields of study in their training often do not meet the practical requirements at the grassroots level and do not align with the planned development, resulting in a patchwork of qualifications. In reality, there are still quite a few commune-level leaders with limited qualifications who lack a deep understanding of their respective areas of responsibility and are not truly proactive and flexible, making it challenging to drive local socio-economic development.

In addition to these challenges, there's also a significant gender imbalance in the commune-level leadership cadre. Over 80% of these leaders are male, and the average age is relatively high (over 50 years old). In some cases, individuals are over 45 years old when they first assume a leadership position.

In terms of skills: During the leadership and management process at the local level, commune-level leaders need to possess fundamental skills such as organizational skills, decision-making abilities, planning and execution skills, public speaking and communication skills, conflict resolution skills, as well as the ability to handle complaints and accusations.

In recent years, with a focus on cultivating knowledge and state management skills, starting from technical positions to

leadership roles, and implementing intermediate programs in political theory and administration, the province has been attentive to the training of commune-level leaders in Thái Nguyên. As a result, this cadre of leaders has been equipped with more fundamental knowledge and skills. Consequently, they have effectively demonstrated enhanced capabilities and a sense of responsibility in their work.

These leaders now possess the capacity to organize and implement decisions actively, mobilizing local residents to participate enthusiastically in various local movements. This has allowed them to harness the collective strength of the community effectively.

However, issues of public service ethics and administrative discipline in the activities of the local political system are currently pressing concerns in the reform and enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of local government management. The distinction between collective responsibility and individual responsibility has not been clearly defined, and there is a lack of mechanisms for the timely replacement of commune-level leaders who do not meet the requirements of their duties. Some commune-level leaders display a lack of enthusiasm in guiding the people in resolving their affairs, and the slow handling of tasks has led to public dissatisfaction and frustration.

Furthermore, some leaders are hesitant to think innovatively or take decisive actions. The conduct and practices in public service activities are not always up to standard, and in some cases, there are indications of personal gain and a lack of a strong service spirit towards the people. Manifestations of arrogance and a sense of entitlement are still present.

Based on these realities, to enhance the quality and capacity of the commune-level leadership cadre, Thai Nguyen province has focused on training and development for the commune-level officials and leaders during the period 2018-2022. Annually, in addition to the proactive efforts of commune-level leaders to improve their professional and technical skills, localities have sent officials to participate in various training and refresher courses organized by competent authorities. These courses aim to update them promptly on current affairs, Party documents, state policies, and laws, while also providing essential skills training relevant to their leadership positions.

Through the implementation of the annual training and development plan, the training and development of commune-level leadership in Thai Nguyen province in political theory, state management, and professional skills have seen positive changes. Annually, the province organizes dozens of training courses for commune-level leaders in both concentrated and non-concentrated forms, benefiting hundreds of officials from communes, wards, and townships. The training and development activities for commune-level leaders are conducted regularly and continuously, contributing to the enhancement of awareness among officials and civil servants. Alongside training and development, commune-level officials timely study and research the resolutions and policies of the Party. Resolution study classes from the provincial to commune levels are well-prepared by the party committees, complete with action plans. The majority of officials and party members are responsible in studying and understanding the resolutions. Many commune-level leaders have shown new progress in organizing and implementing resolutions, effectively bringing the Party's resolutions to life.

In practice, the majority of commune-level officials and civil servants in Thai Nguyen province, in general, and commune-level leaders, in particular, have shown a more solid political awareness and a clear improvement in work efficiency after undergoing training and development. They have learned to apply their acquired knowledge to their assigned tasks and areas of work, thereby enhancing their ability to independently resolve work-related issues. Most officials and civil servants who have been promoted or appointed have effectively fulfilled their duties in their new roles.

However, there are still some limitations and shortcomings in the training and development of commune-level leaders in the province:

Firstly, the determination of training needs for commune-level leaders is still not entirely accurate or objective. Training activities are primarily conducted to meet the standards of positions and titles, rather than being truly linked to the job positions, as well as the actual needs of each individual and leadership role;

Secondly, the training facilities for commune-level leaders in the province, especially at the district level, are not fully equipped with adequate physical infrastructure and teaching and learning equipment. Some part-time lecturers, who are also leaders in local agencies, organizations, associations, and unions, lack pedagogical skills, hence the quality of teaching does not meet the

required standards;

Thirdly, the content, curriculum, and teaching materials lack diversity for different learner groups; there is an overlap in content and a redundancy, with a heavy focus on theory over practical skills and the summarization of practical experiences. Consequently, despite undergoing training, some officials and civil servants still appear confused when executing their tasks; their capacity to grasp, direct, manage, and solve practical issues remains significantly limited.

The slow training method has been innovated. Currently, lecturers predominantly employ presentation methods in their classes, with little assistance from modern technological tools, thereby failing to generate much interest among learners. Moreover, the class size usually ranges from 50 to 60 students, or even more, posing difficulties for instructors who wish to apply active teaching methods.

Fourthly, the training budget for officials and civil servants at the commune level in general, and specifically for commune-level leaders, has not met the demand. Financial support for participants in training courses is very limited, especially when the target audience includes commune-level leaders.

Fifthly, the evaluation process after training and the post-training assignment for commune-level leaders still lack attention from local authorities. Additionally, the evaluation activities during training are formalistic, and addressing the challenges in organizing the training for this workforce still faces many limitations.

The limitations and challenges in the training and development of commune-level leadership in Thai Nguyen Province, as mentioned, can be attributed to several fundamental causes:

Inadequate Legal Regulations: The legal framework governing the training and development of commune-level leaders is still flawed and limited. For instance, there's a lack of a dedicated, tailor-made training strategy that aligns with the unique characteristics and needs of this group.

Disconnect with Local Needs: The training and capacity building for commune-level leaders are not closely linked with the specific needs of the localities. There is a lack of job analysis, position identification, and competency framework development tailored to different leadership roles. Furthermore, the resources allocated for training and development are limited, impacting the effectiveness of these programs.

Theory-Heavy Training Programs: The current training and development programs are heavily theoretical and do not focus enough on practical skills, which are crucial for commune-level officials and civil servants. They need skills to address specific, practical issues they face in their roles. Additionally, the training content is too generalized and does not differentiate between different regions or localities.

Constraints Due to Infrastructure and Geographic Limitations: Given the limitations in physical infrastructure, resource constraints, and geographical challenges, particularly in remote and rural communes, it's challenging to implement advanced technologies and methods (like Industry 4.0 technologies) in training programs. This situation leads to a continued reliance on traditional methods, hindering the introduction of new technologies and skills in the training of commune-level leaders.

These underlying causes highlight the need for a more tailored, practical, and resource-supported approach to the training and development of commune-level leaders, considering their specific local contexts and challenges.

III. CONCLUSION

To effectively reform the training and development content for enhancing the capabilities of commune-level leaders in Thai Nguyen Province, the following requirements should be considered:

Regarding the balance and harmonious integration of training content across knowledge, skills, and attitudes: the training materials for commune-level leadership cadre development need to clarify the requirements and content of knowledge and practical skills; define the target audience for short-term and long-term training and development; establish competency frameworks for job positions; specify the content and methods of training and development; enhance knowledge and skills training according to job title standards and job position requirements in line with the perspective and principles of Resolution No. 26-NQ/TW of the Seventh Central Committee, Twelfth Session: "Supplement knowledge, improve overall proficiency;

comprehensively cultivate skills; periodically update new knowledge for each target group.”[3]

Regarding the up-to-dateness, modernity, and flexibility of training content: A program should be developed for the training and development of commune-level leadership officials that focuses on developing their qualities and capabilities, linked to their job positions. The training and development programs must ensure systematic, modern, and interconnected elements across different training levels. The qualities and capabilities that learners need to achieve include diligence, frugality, integrity, impartiality, being on par with the tasks, absolute loyalty to the Party's ideals and the revolutionary cause, wholeheartedly serving the nation and the people; always being firm in political stance, adhering to Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thoughts, steadfast in the goal of national independence and socialism, and steadfast in the Party's innovation policies. It is evident that in the coming time, it is necessary to continue focusing on improving the quality of training and development programs, updating knowledge for leadership and management positions in a practical manner, equipping strategic vision and thinking, working methods, while also being linked to handling situations arising in the practical context of localities, agencies, units, and the country. To achieve this, significant scientific research is required to evaluate the effectiveness of training and to design a comprehensive training and development program for officials, ensuring the systematic, modern, and unified nature of these training and development programs.

Regarding the consistency and non-duplication compared to existing training programs and materials: The training units for cadres and civil servants of various ministries, sectors, and localities need to closely coordinate with each other in the development and design of training materials for knowledge and working skills for the commune-level leadership cadre, ensuring consistency and appropriateness for each position and title, and avoiding duplication. Simultaneously, it is necessary to establish a network of experts, scientists, lecturers, and reporters with qualifications and experience to proactively organize the training and development of knowledge and skills for commune-level leadership officials.

Methods for developing training content to enhance the capacity of commune-level leadership officials: Decision No. 540/QĐ-TTg dated May 22, 2023, amends and supplements some articles of Decision No. 979/QĐ-TTg dated June 21, 2021, by the Prime Minister approving the Project “Renovation of the content and program of training and development for leadership and management cadres of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics for the period 2021 - 2026” [4]. In this, Decision No. 540/QĐ-TTg amends and supplements point b of paragraph 2, Section I, Article 1 of Decision No. 979/QĐ-TTg dated June 21, 2021, regarding the specific objectives of the Project [5]. Accordingly, the specific objective of the Project is to build and perfect political theory training programs, including:

Training programs updating knowledge according to Regulation No. 164-QĐ/TW dated February 1, 2013, by the Politburo on the regime of training and updating knowledge for leadership and management cadres at all levels;

Political theory training programs as per Decree No. 101/2017/NĐ-CP dated September 1, 2017, by the Government on the training and development of cadres, civil servants, and public employees [6] and Decree No. 89/2021/NĐ-CP dated October 18, 2021, by the Government amending and supplementing some articles of Decree No. 101/2017/NĐ-CP dated September 1, 2017; [7]

Political theory training programs for other subjects and cadres of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.

In addition, the Project also involves the development of new skill enhancement programs for the cadre of leaders and managers in the political system; revising, supplementing, and creating new undergraduate, master's, and doctoral training programs within the training fields of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.

In summary, through an accurate assessment of the capacity and training activities of the commune-level leadership cadre in Thai Nguyen province, the right requirements for innovating training and development activities are identified. Specific directions and solutions are proposed to enhance the capacity of the commune-level leadership cadre in Thai Nguyen province in the coming time.

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