

ENHANCING TEACHERS' CAPACITY FOR "LIFELONG LEARNING" IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: educational programs have been continuously renovated in recent years to meet the needs of society. Thus, the self-improvement of high school teachers is consistently commended for enhancing their professional abilities and meeting the new period's teaching requirements. The purpose of this article is to examine the factors that influence the self-training process of high school teachers in Vietnam's northern mountainous provinces. We conclude and make recommendations for the process based on actual teaching, experience, and data from the work of professional development for high school teachers at the Thai Nguyen University of Pedagogy. Self-improvement is most effective for high school teachers.

Keywords: enhance, professional ability, self-improvement, lifelong learning.

РАСШИРЕНИЕ ВОЗМОЖНОСТЕЙ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ ДЛЯ «ОБУЧЕНИЯ НА ПРОТЯЖЕНИИ ВСЕЙ ЖИЗНИ» В СРЕДНИХ ШКОЛАХ ВЬЕТНАМА

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Аннотация: в последние годы образовательные программы постоянно обновлялись с учетом потребностей общества. Таким образом, самосовершенствование учителей средней школы всегда приветствуется для повышения их профессиональных способностей и соответствия требованиям преподавания нового периода. Цель данной статьи - изучить факторы, влияющие на процесс самообучения учителей старших классов в горных северных провинциях Вьетнама. Мы делаем выводы и даем рекомендации по процессу на основе фактического преподавания, опыта и данных о работе по повышению квалификации учителей средней школы в Педагогическом университете Тай Нгуен. Самосовершенствование наиболее эффективно для учителей средней школы.

Ключевые слова: повышение квалификации, профессиональные способности, самосовершенствование, непрерывное обучение.

1. Introduction

Teachers in high schools play a critical role in educating students to become responsible citizens capable of adapting to a new work environment. Their qualifications and pedagogical abilities will continue to be strengthened and developed as they conduct pedagogical activities with self-awareness, flexibility, and self-improvement. The study of "lifelong learning" enables teachers to "acquire and update new professional knowledge in accordance with their majors and training levels; meet the requirements for improving educational quality." [1]

By examining the factors that influence the self-improvement process of high school teachers in northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam and comparing them to data from professional development courses for high school teachers at Thai Nguyen University of Education, we offer practical solutions for high school teachers' self-improvement to be most effective. By surveying, interviewing, and collecting data on teachers' work results, we have reliable data to analyze and offer specific solutions that assist teachers in finding self-improvement methods that are appropriate for their living situations and teaching practice.

2. Applying Andragogy learning model to the professional self-improvement process of teachers

Alexander Kapp, a German educator, introduced the Andragogy model of learning in 1833, and it has only recently gained traction in the scientific community. The Andragogy model is also mentioned in the research of numerous scientists, including Knowles M., Rachel J.R., Merriam S.B., Hanson, A., and many others [2]. The application of this model to the professional self-improvement process for teachers is necessary because the subjects participating in the courses are usually teachers working at high schools and other educational institutions. To effectively implement the Andragogy model for the purpose of developing teachers' professional skills, it is necessary to understand the principles and critical interactions between learners, as well as the characteristics of adult self-study. The diagram below simulates the Andragogy model in teaching and learning to adults (Figure 1). The Andragogy model distinguishes learners by their age-related physiological and psychological characteristics, specific life experiences, and social status. They are morally mature, economically self-sufficient, and fully aware of their own responsibilities. During the refresher courses, teachers or school administrators need to understand, guide, and encourage them in their self-improvement learning.

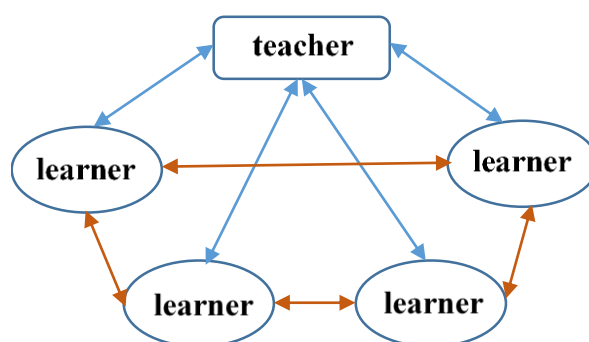


Fig. 1. Andragogy model

According to the Andragogy model, one of the didactic resources available to learners is their life experiences. Each teacher's knowledge, expertise, and techniques are critical in the process of self-improvement for each student. It can be utilized as a tool for self-improvement. This is also consistent with M. Knowles' position. He contended that every individual is enriched by the experiences of others [3].

3. Situation and factors influencing the professional self-improvement process of school teachers in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam

Teachers' self-improvement is highly dependent on their subjective consciousness and on factors outside of social life. As a result, educational institutions must prioritize and create conditions for teachers to focus on self-development on a continuous basis.

To evaluate the effectiveness of applying self-improvement forms, we have surveyed 270 teachers (208 female teachers, accounting for 76.7% and 62 male teachers, accounting for 23.3%) who are teaching in high schools in the northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam such as Cao Bang, Bac Can, Quang Ninh, Ha Giang, and Lao Cai. From those, the group of age 31-40 accounts for 28.1%; the group of age 41-50 accounts for 33.9%; the group of age 51-55 accounts for 24.7%, and the rest represent young teachers from 25-30 years old. The survey results are as follows:

Table 1. What forms of self-improvement do you use (%)?

Forms of self-improvement	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Reading specialized journals/online publications	15.0	24.2	17.8	43.1
Participating in initiative seminars /conferences	18.3	27.8	32.5	21.4
Professional discussions with colleagues in the area	14.7	31.6	33.6	20.1
Professional discussions with colleagues at school.	59.9	21.4	17.0	1.7
Professional discussions with leader in the team	23.6	24.0	24.6	27.8
Using information from the Internet	63.1	15.8	15.3	5.8
Reading professional materials in the school library	43.9	30.2	21.7	4.2
Reading professional materials from personal books	59.9	21.7	17.3	1.1

(1) Frequently; (2) Occasionally; (3) Rarely; (4) Never.

In table 1, we can see that the most common form of self-improvement for teachers is using information from the Internet (63.1%), professional discussions with colleagues at school, and reading professional materials from personal books (59.9%) consider these to be forms of self-improvement suitable for individuals. Interestingly, in

the responses, personal sources dominated (59.9%), not the school library (43.9%). In addition, discussions at the school level (59.9%) were more popular than discussions at the district level (14.7%). Therefore, self-improvement through linkage with colleagues from different schools in the district will not be effective. Self-improvement through specialized journals, online publications, 43.1% of teachers do not use this method at all, and for professional consultation with professional leaders, 27.8% of the teachers answer not to use this method. Participating in seminars and initiatives is also a rare way to promote the process of self-improvement and improvement of teachers' qualifications.

Although quantitative research indicates that teachers use the Internet for self-improvement on a fairly regular basis, teachers responding to face-to-face interviews expressed concerns about this method. Others expressed reservations about using the Internet as their primary source of education. They argue that reading information from the Internet does not constitute self-education; rather, it focuses on "copying" and does not ensure that the information is properly perceived and applied in practice. Table 2 shows the survey results of teachers on the influence of different factors on teachers' self-improvement.

Table 2. Influence of factors on teachers' self-improvement motivation (%)

Elements	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Feedback from students and parents	1.7	5.8	67.8	24.2	0.3
School's evaluation to teacher's performance	1.7	5.3	61.9	30.8	0.3
Students' learning ability affects the improvement of teachers' qualifications	1.3	1.6	75.8	18.9	0.6
Student learning outcomes promote teachers' self-improvement motivation	2.5	9.4	71.9	14.4	1.7
Financial opportunity	4.7	5.6	52.2	34.5	0.3
Changes in teacher standards requirements	3.6	11.7	64.7	17.8	2.2
Support from school leadership	2.8	5.5	60.8	29.2	0.8
Financial sources to attract teachers to develop mountainous education	5.0	17.5	12.5	35.0	25.0
Personal inspiration and life circumstances affect work		2.5	5.5	82.5	9.5

(1)No influence; (2)Little influence; (3)Influence; (4)Much influence; (5) Difficult to answer.

Teachers' responses were roughly evenly distributed for all suggested influencing factors, from 52.2% to 75.8% of teachers. They state that each suggested factor had an effect or a certain effect on their self-improvement. But overall, the financial opportunity is the most important factor, 34.5% of respondents rated it as the most influential. Additionally, 90.5% of teachers say that personal inspiration and life circumstances impact their work as a sizable influencing factor – these results correlate with the most common indicator used by teachers to assess the influence of self-improvement activities on changes in their pedagogical activities. This correlation indicates that personal inspiration and perception of work is the leading factor in improving professional quality. This should be taken into account when we rebuild self-improvement standards.

In fact, financial capacity is a critical factor in each teacher's personal development, as it includes factors such as salary, bonuses, and funds to support teachers' attendance at seminars and training. Personal inspiration at work is the most powerful factor affecting teachers' self-improvement. Forcing teachers to attend courses without financial support can have a detrimental effect on teachers' self-improvement and willingness to contribute to the quality of education; therefore, factors affecting teachers' self-improvement motivation should be noted as well. Table 3 considers other factors that also affect the self-improvement process of teachers. The data in the table shows that more than half of the teachers confirm the influence of all these factors on their professional self-improvement.

Table 3. Factors affecting the self-improvement and self-development of each teacher (%)

Elements	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Lack of funds for seminars and training to improve qualifications	10	6.9	54.4	28.6	
Lack of information on courses, seminars, and advanced training	10	14.4	63.9	10.0	1.7
Relationship between refresher courses and certification	5.1	10.6	69.7	10.6	3.1
Course level	3.1	5.3	71.4	20.0	0.3
Family circumstances	20	6.9	56.9	15.8	0.3
Personal reasons	20	5.6	68.9	5.3	0.3

(1)No influence; (2)Little influence; (3)Influence; (4)Much influence; (5) Difficult to answer.

When we interviewed some teachers in schools, they stated that the absence of methodological guidelines for teachers hampered their process of self-improvement. Additionally, they expressed that the overwhelming amount of housework is a significant impediment to self-education, as it consumes the majority of their free

time. As can be seen, personal and family circumstances have a significant impact on a teacher's personal development and self-improvement process.

To find out which type of professional skill enhancement is most appropriate and preferred, table 4 shows the results of a survey of teachers. It can be seen that the teachers were not biased towards any particular type in the survey: the distribution of answers among the types of self-improvement is practically the same and ranges from 18.5% to 23.5%.

Table 4. What kind of self-training do you like the most?

Individuals proactively update professional knowledge, meet job requirements	23.5 %
Regular consultations with qualified people are trusted by many colleagues	19.8 %
Participating in short-term training classes with specific goals along with state funding support	19.6 %
Professional discussions with colleagues on and off campus	18.6 %
Participating in workshops and short-term training in the locality	18.5 %

From the results of the analysis of factors affecting the self-improvement and professional development of teachers, the following conclusions can be drawn:

While the Internet is an important source of information and knowledge for many teachers, it should not be considered the primary tool for promoting teachers' self-improvement and development: Teachers in mountainous areas will face difficulties due to a lack of computer literacy and foreign language proficiency. Teachers' financial resources continue to be a significant factor in their self-improvement and development processes. Personal inspiration and motivation must be considered as one of the most critical factors in strengthening and developing each teacher's professional competence. Then, teachers' self-improvement will become genuine and effective. The organization of teacher training courses in mountainous areas should be changed and improved to better suit teachers' working conditions and living environment, as these courses have little impact on teachers' career development and individual capacities. Personal factors and daily life, particularly the workload of teachers, particularly female teachers who are also responsible for household chores, are significant factors affecting motivation, consciousness, and the process of self-development.

4. Some recommendations

We recommend the following measures based on the findings of the preceding research and in order to establish a sound and effective system for professional development and a lifelong learning environment for teachers:

1. Develop national educational standards, policies affecting the field of training, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in the teaching process.
2. Establish evaluation indicators for refresher courses that accurately reflect the quality of teacher education.
3. Take teacher professional development into account when determining the effectiveness of the teacher's actual work in relation to the teacher's salary.
4. Modify the process for awarding certificates of completion of courses aimed at enhancing teachers' professional capacity.
5. Provide high-quality Internet services to schools and assistance to teachers in accessing Internet resources. Instruct teachers in the use of appropriate information and online resources to supplement their expertise and broaden their understanding.
6. Create an electronic library for teachers in mountainous areas that enables them to easily access, locate, and apply appropriate materials to their classroom instruction.
7. Develop a model of a network of teachers with the same expertise in schools and districts so that teachers can exchange to improve their expertise.
8. Develop effective support policies for female teachers, creating conditions for them to improve their professional skills and develop their own capacities.

5. Conclusion

To achieve success in the teaching profession, each teacher must gradually improve himself, must have the ability to self-study continuously and regularly. No method is effective if teachers themselves do not recognize the need to improve their own professional competence. It is very effective for universities to apply Andragogy teaching principles to professional training courses for teachers. From the practice of teaching adult students, the issue of "lifelong education" should become one of the national goals and plans to develop continuing education in Vietnam.

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