

**Addaiyan Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

© Addaiyan International Publishers

(An international Publisher of Research &amp; Academic Resources)

Journal Homepage: <https://aipublisher.org/projects/ajahss/>

ISSN : 2581-8783 (Online)

DOI: 10.36099/ajahss.3.6.8

**Management of Primary Teachers according to the Approach of Competency-based Human Resources Management**Tien-Hung Nguyen<sup>1\*</sup>, James Frideres<sup>2</sup>, Xuan-Dung Chu<sup>3</sup>, Thi-Viet-Ha Luong<sup>4</sup>, Quoc-Toan Pham<sup>5</sup>, Van-Hoat Dinh<sup>6</sup><sup>1</sup>The Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences, <sup>2</sup>The University of Calgary, Canada, <sup>3</sup>Hanoi Department of Education and Training, Vietnam, <sup>4</sup>National Education Union of Vietnam, <sup>5</sup>Hanoi Department of Education and Training, <sup>6</sup>Van Ho Educational Department, Son La, Vietnam.**Corresponding Author\***

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**Article History**

Received: 25.06.2021

Accepted: 28.06.2021

Published: 29.06.2021



**Abstract:** This research focus on how to ensure primary teacher's management according to an approach of competency-based human resources management in theories as well as how to apply in the Van Ho District, Son La Province of Vietnam as a case study. Nine criteria and 48 indicators were identified according to the dimensions of human resources management A) Planning; B) Managing the plan; C) Monitoring/assessing the results and providing feedback for improvement. To obtain the data, five hundred people participated in the survey and seventy-seven people were involved in focus groups. The case study focuses on three human resource issues: 1) The primary teacher's professional standard, which was used in primary teacher's management in Van Ho (mainly based on professional standards regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam); 2) The policy framework for motivating and encouraging primary teachers regarding the teaching policies of Vietnam; and 3) How

the processes of primary teacher professional development could be carried out in the Van Ho context. The results show the human resource potential solutions for resolving the issues.

**Keywords:** *Human Resources; Competency-based Human Resources Management; Primary Teachers; Primary Teachers Management; Professional Development of Primary Teachers.*

**1. Introduction**

Human resource management is about the development of workers within an organization that focuses on the personal and professional advancement of individual competencies to help the organization reach its goals/objectives [1, 2]. It is different from personal management in that it focuses on how to match human resource competencies with the organizational objectives, while personnel management focuses on the performance of daily human resources administrative tasks and duties [3].

In fact, primary teacher's competencies are played important roles in teaching quality that contributes to the success of pupils. Human resource management in the field of education has played an important role in its contribution to the improved quality of teachers and staff [4, 5, 6, 7]. As Tensay and Singh (2020), as well as Katou (2008), indicates, human resource management, specially its policies and their outcome

(skills, attitudes, behaviour) are implemented to influence the performance of the organization in general and primary school in special [8, 9, 10]. In addition, human resource management can add to the value for stakeholders (e.g., students/pupils, teachers, staffs) through human resources developing competencies, improving motivation and engagement, shaping its culture and developing more effective leadership of organization/primary school [11]. In the global economy, if an organization/primary school is to survive, they require that human resources develop competencies and processes that result in qualified and skilled workers or primary teachers and staff [12].

Today, it is moving toward a new model of human resources management based on competency as well as competency-based strategic human resources management [13]. To implement the new model, it is necessary to integrate competence theory in planning, training, performance appraisal, and salary management of human resources or primary teachers [14]. Moreover, competency-based strategic human resource management means the process must take into consideration organizations at different stages of development [15, 16]. In other words, it requires the integration of all human resources management functions, including the goals and responsiveness of the organization/primary school to its external environment [17].

As Horvathova, Copikova and Mokra (2019) point out, the new model is an approach to use human resource management centered around competencies; unlike traditional management focused on the qualifications and/or characteristics and intelligence of individual workers [18]. Thus, competency is used as a foundation for recruitment, selection, training and development, rewards, and other aspects of worker or teacher's and staffs' performance management [4, 19, 20, 21]. As such, the focus of organization/primary schools is upon the "competency" of the individual and achievable within their context at different stages [15].

Huselid (1995) [22], Huang (1998) [23], Dimba and K'Óbonyo (2009) [24], and Abdulkadir (2009) [25] all suggest that the above process should be used by organizations to acquire and develop their human capital, as they, either individually or as a system, are associated with higher levels of performance of the organization. Ratnawat (2018) also notes human resource management is a useful approach for managing different aspects of teacher and staff management, ranging from recruitment and selection to separation and succession planning [4].

Nevertheless, how competency-based human resource management is carried out to meet the requirements of human resources for developing organizations in different stages remains problematic [26, 16]. In addition, while competency-based human resource management has gained global attention in the world of business, it has not been utilized fully in the education reforms in general and management of primary teachers in particular.

The research focus of this study deals with three human resources research questions that address the issues identified above:

(1) What are the criteria and their indicators for the success of the primary teachers' management based on the approach of competency-based human resources management in theories?

(2) How to apply the above criteria and their indicators for identifying issues faced by primary teachers' management and how they are correlated with its results in practice? This paper presents a

study's results of Management of primary teacher based on professional standards<sup>1</sup> in Van Ho, Vietnam as a case study of how to apply in practice.

(3) What are solutions for resolving the above issues and how they would be implemented?

## 2. Theoretical framework and literature review (Research Question 1)

Human resource management has been defined in various ways. The Michigan School provided one the first explicit statements of its concept as a human resources cycle consisting of four generic processes or functions which are performed in all organizations which including primary schools: Selection for matching available human resources to jobs; Appraisal for performance management; Rewards as managerial tools for driving organizational performance; and Development to achieve high-quality workers [27]. It also can be understood as effective processes from recruitment, selection, and induction of new workers or primary teachers entering an organization, performance appraisal, motivation, and professional development for their effective working, to dismissal and outplacement for leaving the organization/primary school [11, 28].

Next, competency-based human resource management is the process that concentrates on using competency as the foundation for driving recruitment, selection, placement, orientation, training, performance management, and staffs' rewards to meet the needs of the organization/primary school [11, 28]. In addition, competency-based strategic human resource management can be described as competency-based human resource management, but organizations/primary schools seek to link the human, social, and intellectual capital of their members or primary teachers to their strategic needs for achieving the goals [15, 29, 30]. In this case, when the competencies' framework of primary teachers is developed according to their different stages of primary schools' development, it can be seen that the competency-based human resource management can be understood almost as competency-based strategic human resource management [15, 31].

Besides, traditional human resource management concentrates on the work activities of workers, so that it does not keep up with the contextual changes nor does direct management attention focus on the desired performance or results. In contrast, competency-based human resource management focusses on results. Moreover, work activities and specific work tasks are transitory, while competency is enduring. Therefore, as Dubois et al. (2004) [28] argue, competency models should become the foundation for the human resource management by the way of supplementing traditional job descriptions.

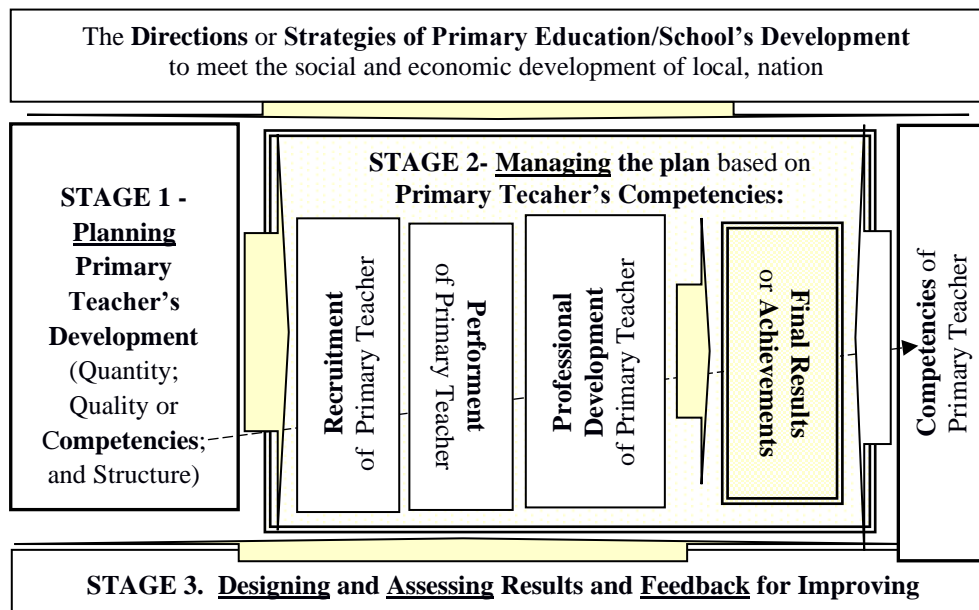
In this paper, according to the approaches or theories of Competency-based Human Resource Management, Management of Primary Teacher based on Competency can be understood as processes of planning that focus on the quantity, quality (relating to competencies), and structure of primary teachers; and it also uses the competencies for managing the plan focused on each of its components (recruitment, performance, professional development of primary teachers) to meet the development of primary education/school in different stages [15].

The goal of competency-based systems is to increase the competencies of the primary teachers aligned with the goals of education, which, in turn, supports quality learning for the pupils. In addition, the better-

<sup>1</sup> As in Vietnam the term of "Professional Standards" is almost equivalent to "Competency"

educated pupils will lead to improved social and economic development locally, regionally, and throughout the country. The significance of the competencies here is the key enabling factor for an organization/primary school to create its own sustainability [32] and it connects all the different components of human resource management [15].

In summary, the present research carried out should be viewed as a process and Figure 1 presents the process by which, criteria and indicators for the success of primary teacher's management based on competencies can be identified.



**Figure 1.** Process of primary teachers' management based on competencies (Adapting from: Ezeugbor and Victor (2018) [33]; Prabawati, Meirinawati and Aoktariyanda (2017) [34]; Human Resources Association (2015) [35]; Nguyen (2014a) [15]; Naveen and Raju (2014) [36]; Cook (2002) [37] etc.)

To further elucidate the model, the processes undertaken for each of the stages to identify criteria and their indicators of the success of competencies-based primary teacher management is discussed below.

### 2.1. Stage 1 - Planning primary teachers' development

This stage aims at identifying the quantity, quality or competencies' framework and structure of primary teachers to meet the primary education/school's development [15]. According to Boateng (2007) [38], the primary teacher's planning process reviews human resources requirements to ensure that the organization or in our case, the primary school, has the required number of primary teachers, with the necessary skills, to meet its goals. This is the sole responsibility of the Department of Education as well as primary schools and includes the following steps [15]:

*Step 1 - Organizing assessment of primary teachers' situation - baseline data (Criterion 1)*

This step involves assessing the number of primary teachers (based on the number of pupils) as well as the level of training, degree, age, and gender of primary teachers. In addition, it looks at the quality of primary teachers according to the level of competencies' framework established by the Department of

Education. Finally, it looks at the opportunities for advancement in the school system [15]. To complete the assessment, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOT) are based on scanning both internal as well as external environment (e.g., trends of population, age cohort of primary school age and various projects of social and economic development, changing in regulations, values, culture, technology) in the region (Indicators 1-5 address this issue, see Appendix<sup>2</sup>)[15, 3].

### *Step 2 – Planning development of primary teachers (Criterion 2)*

Based on the results of the First step, a plan for primary teachers is designed taking into consideration *quantity, quality, and structure* to satisfy requirements for achieving the objectives of the education/school development (Indicators 7-9) [15, 39, 40].

The quality dimension relates to and should be the baseline for primary teachers' achieving which level of the competencies' framework. According to Nguyen (2017a), the framework and its level should be developed based on analyzing the position of primary teachers according to the local education/primary school's conditions [42]. Once this is completed, they would compare the framework with the one regulated by Ministry of Education and Training at the national level [15, 35]. In addition, the primary teachers' *quantity* and *structure* are predicted based on analyzing and comparing forecasts of the number of students as well as the development of primary school's networks and the primary education's structure in Van Ho [15, 43].

### **2.2. Stage 2 – Managing the plan based on competencies' framework of primary teachers**

Stage 2 focuses on managing the recruitment of new primary teachers, their performances, and professional development. Essentially, the competencies' framework of primary teachers should be used to design, implement and connect the components to each other in this Stage [15, 44, 45].

### *Step 3 – Managing design of components of primary teachers' management based on competencies' framework (Criterion 3)*

This requires an alignment between the educational goals established by the Department of Education as well as the Ministry of Education and Training and the training and human capital of teachers. This entails three dimensions: *Vertical Alignment* - the alignment between the educational goals and the human capital; *Horizontal Alignment* - the internal alignment between the set of human resource/primary teachers' policies and the development of human capital; and *Action* - the degree to which the policies are enacted or put into practice, as judged by employee/primary teacher's experience and management behavior and values [46, 47] (Indicators 12-15).

Therefore, for success, this step must focus on the primary teachers' competency. In addition, as Ulrich (1997) [48] points out, the systems approach requires that all the components or subsystems of human resources/primary teachers' management must be designed consistently and fully integrated with each other and with the other components/processes of organization/primary school [15, 11, 29].

### *Step 4 – Managing recruitment of primary teachers based on competencies' framework (Criterion 4)*

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<sup>2</sup> The criteria and Indicators in Appendix were adapted according to the Van Ho's context

Recruitment and selection are in correlation with the performances of organizations/primary schools [49] and they are key components at the entry point of any work place, so that they are two essential functions of human resources management (Indicators 17-22). Recruitment is the initial step in finding potential candidates; on the other hand, the selection is concerned with securing information about the applicant that is germane to the job [36]. This means that it will involve the competencies' framework and these criteria will then be used to assess competencies for each of the candidates selected. In addition, this step will look at the regulations of the Department of Education and primary schools regarding the number of teachers required as well as their professional qualifications [15].

For example, Bloom and Reenen (2010) [5] argue that for recruitment, different techniques should be utilized, such as writing, interviewing, testing, and demonstration of teaching. They also note that recruitment must be carried out fairly and reliably for selecting new primary teachers to meet the competencies' framework of primary teachers. Thus, there is a need to ensure that the new individual primary teachers' profile and competencies match the characteristics and goals of the primary school they wish to be employed with.

*Step 5 – Managing primary teachers' performance based on competencies' framework (Criterion 5 and 6)*

Once the primary teacher has been hired, the next step involves the management of their overall activities related to their productivity. Using the competencies' framework of primary teachers as a measure for appraising primary teachers' performances, allows for the identification of their strengths and weaknesses (Indicators 24 - 29). The appraisal of their performance should be based not only on their professional qualifications relative to the targets established by the Department of Education but also their levels of competencies [15]. As such, the indicators for the appraisal need to be based on the competencies' framework. Finally, the sources for feedback to primary teachers should be based upon reports, surveys, interviews, observations, as well as self-assessment by primary teachers [5].

Next, based on the above strengths and weaknesses, the primary school can establish goals to develop effective, highly skilled, and productive primary teachers. This information should provide feedback for improving their performance to meet the development of primary schools [15]. This feedback can take an informal approach in which performance is casually discussed and documented; or/and a more formal approach in which, performance is evaluated based on key performance indicators [5]. The most common performance assessment often consists of: identifying where primary teachers fall on a scale of "below expectations" to "exceeds expectations." Other strategies identified include management rating of the performance of a primary teacher, peer review, self-assessment and a 360-degree review [1, 50].

In addition, human development policies implemented to improve the performance of primary teachers should instill appropriate motivation [33]; and they should not only focus on money [51] but include other types of rewards that enhance the competency of primary teachers [52]. Therefore, it is important that a policy framework be developed for ensuring motivation and encouragement of primary teachers [8, 3, 15]. In the end, the management of primary teachers' performance must be translated into a set of indicators for measuring and evaluating primary teachers' competencies [53].

*Step 6 – Managing development of primary teachers' profession based on competencies' framework*

(Criterion 7)

This step aims at using the competencies' framework for developing primary teachers' professional abilities to achieve the primary schools' development goals [15]. The competence (a combination of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that can be used to improve performance) of primary teachers is crucial in carrying out the vision and mission of the primary school. In education, competencies need to be demonstrated; the main difference between standards and competencies is that standards are fixed and competencies can always be improved [34] (Indicators 31, 32 and 34).

In conclusion, measuring primary teachers' competencies with the competencies' framework identifies potential "gaps" of competencies and creates a base for designing training exercises and courses for primary teachers [5, 37]. A variety of organization/primary schools' policies for supporting and encouraging primary teachers' self-studies needs to be put in place (e.g., attending relevant training programs, taking courses; and mobilizing and using effectively external resources such as communities for developing primary teachers' profession [39, 5, 44].

### **2.3. Stage 3 – Designing and assessing results and feedback for improvement (Criterion 8 and 9)**

In general, the success of primary teachers' activities, based on competencies, requires information on the quantity, quality, and structure of primary teacher's defined profession to achieve the primary education/schools' development at different stages. Therefore, it requires the need to establish and operate a system of controlling and assessing quality based on the competencies' framework of primary teachers and then providing feedback for continuous improvement that contributes to assuring the quality of all components of management of primary teachers [15].

Feedback is very important in this stage as its goal is to achieve work objectives by reinforcing or changing behavior through the sharing of observations about primary teachers' performance or work-related behaviors [54]. Feedback can be carried out in different ways such as direct reports or peer reviews. The primary education/school should create available channels for feedback to teachers to enable them to build on their strengths, address areas in need of development, and achieve their performance goals [1]. In this regard, all indicators should be measuring the goals, tasks, and contents of primary teachers' activities (Indicators 36-45). Moreover, the operation of the system must be fair, transparent, and relevant; the components of primary teachers' management should be regularly assessed according to their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats/challenges. The results of the processes should reflect primary teachers' activities; be provided on time for improving their development and opportunities should be created for evaluating the results by primary teachers [15].

In conclusion, the primary teachers' management based on competencies consists of quantity, quality and structure of the primary teachers. As such, the model should assess the primary teachers' quantity, quality and structure in comparison with directions/strategies of developing the primary education/school at different stages. Thus, it requires that the results/achievements of quantity, quality and structure of primary teachers must meet requirements of the primary education/school development in different stages (Indicators 46-48).

The model presented also assumes that there will be the establishment and operation of mechanisms for

assuring active and responsible participation for all the stakeholders in the above processes (e.g., teachers, community members, administrators) (Indicators 6, 10, 33, and 39). In addition, the stages of primary teachers' management based on competencies will need to be taken into consideration. This means that revisions, additions or deletions of competencies' framework in each of the stages take place and these will be public and accessible to all stakeholders (Indicators 11, 16, 23, 30, 35 and 41). Finally, the above processes and components of the primary teachers' management based on competencies must be consistent and relevant to each other in design as well as successfully implementing the direction/strategies of primary education/school's development at different stages [55].

### 3. Methods

To address the second research question posed, a survey was conducted to assess the situation of primary teachers' management based on competencies/professional standards in Van Ho, Vietnam. Prior to data collection, a questionnaire was designed based on the nine criteria and 48 indicators identified in the above theoretical framework. Prior to data collection, a pretest of the questionnaire was piloted with five officers of the Department of Education, five principals and assistant principals, 54 primary teachers, and five staff members from two primary schools in Van Ho. After analyzing the results of this pretest, the questionnaire was completed as see in Appendix. The survey was carried out with 12 officers of Van Ho's Department of Education (with the total of 15 accounted for 80%), 19 principals and assistant principals (100%), 445 primary teachers (with the total of 448 accounted for 99%), 24 related staffs (with the total of 32 accounted for 75%) from 14 different primary schools in Van Ho (100%) (N=500). The language of the questionnaire is Vietnamese, however, for purposes of this paper, it has been translated into English.

Each indicator/question used to operationalize the nine criteria, had a four-point scale<sup>3</sup> as follows: "1.00 – 1.75" indicates "Inadequate and Improvement is Necessary"; "1.76 - 2.50" indicates "Adequate but Minor Improvement Needed"; "2.51 – 3.25" indicates "Adequate as Expected and Improving as Planned"; and "3.26 – 4.00" indicates "Better than Adequate" (Adapted from AUN-QA (2016) [56].

After the survey, a draft report of the situation and proposed solutions of Van Ho primary teachers' management based on professional standards was drafted. In addition, eight focus groups were conducted separately aimed at validating the survey results and clarifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOT) as well as proposing solutions in the first draft report. The eight focus groups included: one with 7 officers of Department of Education; and seven with total of 14 principals/ assistant principals, 42 Primary Teachers, 14 relating staffs (1 principal/assistant principal, 3 Primary Teachers; and 1 relating staff selected for each PriSch) from 14 primary schools.

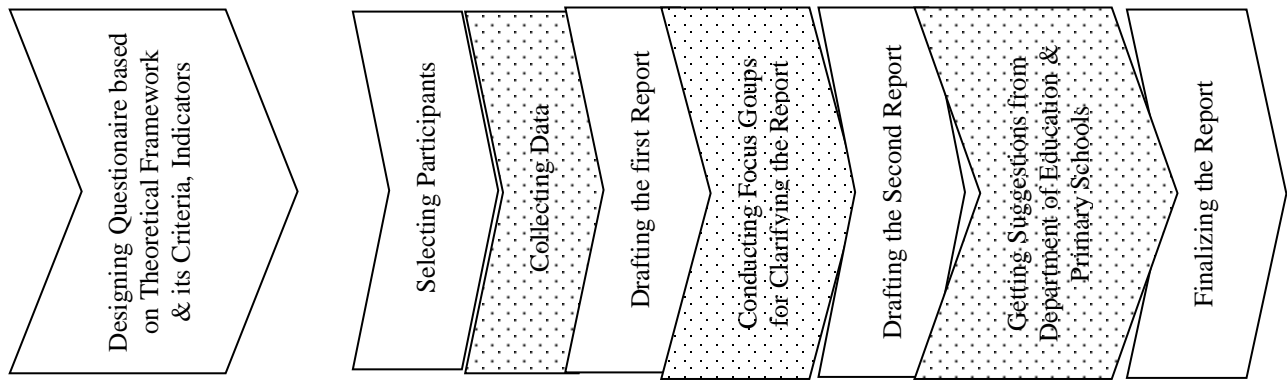
After the focus group inputs, a second report was drafted based on the additional input from the focus group participants. The second draft was then sent to the Department of Education and 14 primary schools of Van Ho for final suggestions presented in the next sections of this paper.

The above procedures are summarized in Figure 2 as below:

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<sup>3</sup> The four-point scale was used as they are in accordance with the four-ranging assessment of primary teachers based on professional standards regulated by Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (2018) [78]





**Figure 2.** The procedures of pilot study's design for primary teachers' management based on professional standards in Van Ho

#### 4. The Van Ho primary teachers' management based on professional standards and analysis/discussion of its issues (Research Question 2)

Overall, the analysis shows that values of Cronbach's Alpha for the criteria (1-9) used for assessing the situation of primary teachers' management based on professional standards in Van Ho ranged from 0.759 to 0.905. These scores establish the reliability of the data.

Besides the synthetic results of the situation of primary teachers' management based on professional standards in Van Ho are presented in the Appendix. Below is analysis/discussion regarding indicators that were considered "Adequate but Minor Improvement Needed" (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Indicators of the primary teachers' management based on professional standards in Van Ho with low Means and large Standard Deviations (N=500)

Questions/Indicators	Mean	SD
Question/Indicator 3	2.46	1.102
Question/Indicator 9	2.49	1.139
Question/Indicator 28	2.45	0.950
Question/Indicator 32	2.40	1.023
Question/Indicator 31	2.41	1.033
Question/Indicator 33	2.37	1.029
Question/Indicator 34	2.39	1.066
Question/Indicator 47	2.43	1.041

Table 1 shows the means of indicators with low scores (Adequate but Minor Improvement Needed) and high standard deviations. Firstly, it begins with a discussion of the primary teacher's professional standards in Van Ho. The issue of quality/competency of primary teachers is assessed based on the professional standards regulated by the Van Ho's Department of Education at different stages (indicators 3 and 9 identified in Table 2). The focus groups discussions that took place noted that the main reason for such low scores was that the assessment process of primary teachers' qualities in Van Ho, which consisted of self-assessment by primary teachers, peer-review and assessments by the principal or assistant to the principal of primary schools, was mainly based on the current professional standards regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. All the participants in the focus groups

also noted that the primary teachers' professional standards should be developed based on the Van Ho context, as argued by some participants "There are a number of ethnic minorities located in Van Ho which is unique to Vietnam and this needed to be taken into account".

Moreover, the participants of the focus groups noted that the requirement of the foreign language of primary teachers should be focused on the ethnic minority language, as five participants said that "the King language level of pupils in this area is limited". Participants also noted that the current professional standards (2018) consist of five criteria and 15 indicators for all general teachers (upper and lower secondary as well as primary teachers). As such, each teacher is assessed according to four scales (i.e., not achieved, achieved, fair achieved and good achievement) and thus professional standards need to be relevant to each level in the Van Ho context.

Secondly, it now turns to the indicators focused on motivation and encouragement policies for primary teachers in Van Ho (Indicators 28 and 32). Both indicators reveal low means and high standard deviations. As noted in the focus group discussions, these policies should be more achievable within the Van Ho's context. Almost all participants noted that it was not only the poor physical and morale conditions of primary schools in Van Ho, but primary teachers also had to spend much of their time focusing on their teaching, so that they did not have additional time for self-study. In fact, when primary teachers attended the training/fostering courses, their income decreased dramatically. In addition, it was noted there were limited opportunities for taking courses outside of Son La and especially overseas, so that the Van Ho primary teachers would require financial assistance to support these activities. In the end, primary teachers complained that the above difficulties were the main reason that many quit their job. Therefore, all participants suggested that "the policy framework (e.g., reward, discipline and promotion; payment, support funding and time for primary teachers to develop their profession) should be developed to support and motivate primary teachers to continue to teach in Van Ho".

Thirdly, the third set of indicators that had low means (Adequate but Minor Improvement Needed) focused on the professional development of primary teachers in Van Ho (Indicators 31-34). The focus groups noted the professional development of primary teachers needed to be more focused on defining training and fostering needs, in addition to designing appropriate courses based on the needs. Moreover, more attention was needed to developing policies that supported and encouraged the professional development of primary teachers. Participants in the focus groups also felt that all stakeholders, including administration, parents, and communities, be encouraged to support and contribute to resources for developing the primary teachers' profession at different stages. In Van Ho, the focus groups discussions argued that the courses for their professional development should focus on upgrading new knowledge, skills, and teaching methods at the Department of Education level at Son La province and/or Van Ho. In addition, the Department of Education should improve the quality of primary teachers according to her/his/their needs at the primary school level. For example, "skills on how to connect academic subject matter with local practices (e.g., experimental learning) were needed to develop their teaching competencies" as said by almost all primary teachers.

Finally, the final result of the quality of primary teachers (Indicator 47) was low scores (Adequate but Minor Improvement Needed) and high standard deviations (see Table 1). In addition, Table 2 shows that

this indicator is highly correlated with all the other indicators (ranging from about .5 to .8 and statistically significant at the 0.01 level). Therefore, it can be seen that the quality of primary teacher (Indicator 47) should be improved by making: the professional standards (Indicator 3 and 9), the policies' framework of motivation and encouragement (Indicator 28) and professional development (Indicators from 31 to 34) for a primary teacher to be more relevant and realizable to the Van Ho's context.

**Table 2.** Correlation between the final result of quality of primary teacher with its issues in Van Ho

		Questions/Indicators						
		3	9	28	31	32	33	34
47	Pearson							
	Correlation	0.600**	0.639**	0.713**	0.833**	0.491**	0.676**	0.677**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N		500	500	500	500	500	500	500

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## 5. Solutions (Research Question 3)

It now turns to addressing the third research question that focused on finding solutions for improving the competency and motivation of primary teachers, which was faced by the management of primary teachers in Van Ho as presenting in the above [57]. The solutions are based upon the data and validated by the external participants in the research endeavor—focus groups, administrators, Department of Education participants. The results suggest three solutions for improving the primary teacher's management based on competencies/professional standards in Van Ho:

### 5.1. Solution 1 - Organizing the development of primary teachers' professional standards to meet the needs of primary education/schools in Van Ho

In general, it can be said that a competencies' framework or professional standards of primary teachers is a descriptive tool that identifies the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviour needed to perform effectively in the primary school [58]. It also is a list of competencies along with their definitions and effective and ineffective behavior. Moreover, the competencies should be focused on the following categories: Technical/ Professional, Methodological/ methods competencies, Social and Personal competencies [59, 60, 61, 31]. In addition, a competency measure provides criteria that help primary teachers to identify the required competencies to effectively perform a given job [4]. As discussed above, the Van Ho's professional standards is used not only for planning primary teachers' development but also for managing the achievement of the plan according to its components in Van Ho.

The first solution emerging from the data focuses on organizing the development of primary teachers' professional standards to meet the needs of primary education schools in Van Ho and its process of dealing with the current professional standards regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam [37]. The goals and operation of primary teachers are impacted by many stakeholders, such as administrators of all levels, principals, other primary teachers, parents, and community's members.

Therefore, as a first step to successfully develop professional standards that are relevant, transparent and achievable within the Van Ho's context. As additional input from the focus groups that participants felt a Council, which would be led by the Van Ho Department of Education, needs to be established for creating and organizing processes and activities of primary teachers' professional standards. In addition, all related stakeholders must be willing to participate in the processes of developing the primary teachers' professional standards [62]. As such, representation from a variety of stakeholder's group (e.g., all administrative levels, principals and their assistants, primary teachers, community's members), should be proportionally appointed to the Council. Moreover, the tasks/activities of this Council must be defined clearly (as discussed in the next paragraphs below).

The second step would focus on the analysis of primary teachers' working position in Van Ho and would consist of several integrated activities [63, 28]. These activities would include the Council inviting teaching and educational experts and practicing teachers, principals of primary school to co-construct what the ideal primary teachers' competency would consist of a job description (e.g., instructional, administrative, communicative). In addition, results from prior research need to be incorporated into the activities and job descriptions of all primary teachers' activities (e.g., preparing lessons, assessing students, managing classes). In summary, the activities of primary teachers need to be defined, prioritized and then the identification of level and kind of support required for successfully carrying them out.

The third step would be to identify the factors that influence primary teachers' activities. To begin with, the activities need to be organized in terms of those considered internal (teacher competency, student characteristics, educational environment, facilities, equipment) vs. external (regulations of Van Ho Educational Department; characteristics of student's families, communities) to the primary teachers' activities in Van Ho.

Drafting the primary teachers' professional standards to meet the Van Ho's context would be the next step taken. Moreover, the activities of primary teachers' professional standards of Van Ho would need to be linked to the competencies (e.g., knowledge, skills and attitudes) based on the primary teachers' professional standards regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam to meet the Van Ho's context [64, 65, 35].

It should be noted that to achieve this goal, more intensive data collection and discussions with related experts and experienced primary teachers need to be undertaken. For example, information on the rate of frequency and importance of each competency and how it is related to tasks/activities of primary teachers in Van Ho needs to be established. As such, there would be different levels of competencies/professional standards to meet different purposes, such as recruitment, employment, training and fostering/professional development for primary teachers in Van Ho – These also were notes of participants from the focus group as well as suggestions of Department of Education and primary schools in Van Ho for the final report. This *last step* would be submitted to the Council for approval.

### ***5.2. Solution 2 - Organizing development of policy's framework for motivating and encouraging primary teachers in Van Ho***

This solution would involve the development of a policy framework for motivating and encouraging primary teachers to meet the primary education/schools' conditions in Van Ho [8]. According to the

participants in the focus groups, the policy framework should include: reward and professional support systems that are equitable and respectful for primary teachers; promoting primary teachers with excellent achievements/results; payment for primary teachers based on their achieving professional standards milestones; fiscal compensation and professional leave for primary teachers to develop their professional credentials; giving special treatment of increasing salary, allowance, working place, accommodation to work as primary teachers in Van Ho.

The data collected suggests a process for developing the above policy's framework for primary teachers in Van Ho (Show HOW) [66]. To begin with, the Council would develop a policy for motivating and encouraging primary teachers in Van Ho to develop their professional credentials. However, the strengths and weaknesses of the policy would need to be reviewed by stakeholders before becoming a formal policy to ensure "buy in" by all participants.

To facilitate the success of implementing the policy, it should focus on organizing the following four activities [67]:

- Analyze the *political context* of Van Ho as it impacts on primary education schools, especially on primary teachers' activities (e.g., roles, the process of the decision's making) and ensuring the policies are clearly relevant to the social and political institutions in Van Ho.
- Analyze the context of the *economic development* in Van Ho as well as how it impacts on primary education/schools and primary teachers' activities.
- Analyze the *social and cultural context* of Van Ho, especially how the attitudes of community members related to roles, importance, and tasks of primary education/schools as well as of primary teachers.
- Analyze *existing and potential technologies related to education*: primary teachers' activities are impacted by new technological development. Because different stakeholders will have different concerns/interests about roles, importance and tasks of primary teachers, it is important that the various stakeholder's groups be identified; then creating opportunities for stakeholders to participate in policy development of factors that would motivate and encourage primary teachers in Van Ho to respond to these changes.

The final step would be drafting options for revising or designing new policies of primary teachers' motivation and encouragement in Van Ho. To facilitate the development of a revised policy, different strategies would need to be undertaken. For example, collecting data, defining priorities and options by listing all results/achievements which can occur, and then choosing the best options. This would involve taking into consideration the concerns of stakeholders related to primary education school development as suggestions from the focus group as well as Department of Education and primary schools. This also would involve incremental changes in the short term. In addition, the external environment (e.g., political, economic issues in the Son La and Van Ho regions) would need to be taken into consideration as to how the policy will be implemented. Educators have the necessary in-depth knowledge and should have the greatest input into all the above processes.

Once the policy is tentatively formulated, it should then be assessed using the criteria established by The

Office of the Auditor General (2003) [68]. The analysis of the policy framework would need to address such issues as: Which teachers benefit or are threatened? How to compensate teachers? and how are primary teachers in Van Ho encouraged and motivated? In addition, budgetary considerations would need to be considered as well as the ability of institutions to implement the proposed policy. As noted previously, the new or revised policy would need to be supported by the community, teachers, and politicians. Once the policy's options are decided, these options should be shared with provincial/Son La, district/Van Ho governments and link to stakeholders through surveys, online discussions, interviews, workshops, forums, and community discussions. Once that activity is concluded, the Council would be ready to approve the policy [69].

Once the policy is approved, the Council would plan for the implementation, including schedules of mobilizing resources (experts and material resources) as well as budgets [51]. In addition, there will need to be a concerted effort by various politicians, government officials to publically support the new/revised policy and create alliances between educators and other stakeholders [70]. Monitoring the new policy would be carried out to revise the policy when required [71].

### ***5.3. Solution 3 - Organizing development of primary teachers' profession based on professional standards in Van Ho***

The third proposed solution deals with organizing the development of the Van Ho primary teachers' profession based on professional standards that focuses on the upgrading of primary teachers' competencies to meet the requirements of the primary education/school development in Van Ho, as notes by participants from the focus groups and suggestions of Department of Education and primary schools. This is one of the most important components of the primary teachers' management based on the professional standards as it contributes to upgrading the Van Ho primary teachers' quality/competency to meet the requirements of successfully achieving the primary education/schools' development at different stages [34].

The use of professional standards as a measure for assessing primary teachers' competencies, also identifies the "gaps" of their competencies; and based on these gaps it can define the needs/demands. Once that happens, planning and the implementation of its plan for improving/upgrading the primary teachers' quality in Van Ho can take place [39].

As noted above, the first step would be the creation of a Council that would oversee the primary teachers' profession based on professional standards in Van Ho with the support of the Van Ho's Department of Education. The next step would be to assess the needs and planning for professional learning as well as fostering primary teachers based on professional standards in Van Ho. This step focuses on using the professional standards to monitor and assess periodically the strengths and weaknesses and its plans for professional learning and fostering primary teachers' professional development. In addition, the primary teachers' competencies would be assessed based on professional standards to identify the level of their competencies and the needs for improving primary teachers' competencies [72].

This would require a plan of training and fostering primary teachers over time to upgrade their competencies. This step would be focused on the professional learning and fostering of competencies of primary teachers based on professional standards in Van Ho. To achieve this, a network of professional

learning institutions would need to be established to monitor and support primary teachers' enhancing their competencies. In addition, there would be the need to develop course materials for primary teachers [73, 74]. Learning networks and communities would need to be developed inside and outside of the primary school for sharing knowledge and experiences among primary teachers [75]. In addition, regular seminars, workshops, conferences and research engagement will need to be put in place to enhance teachers' job performance [33, 76]. It should be noted that the assessment process is extremely important in the success of this entire process which was suggestions from the Department of Education and primary schools.

The last step would focus on the regular monitoring of primary teachers and relevant feedback to them. In summary, the most important component is aligning all aspects of the education system to achieve success. Teachers, administrators, community members, provincial leaders, and educational ministries will need to complement the activities of the Council and ensure that relevant policies are put in place to enhance the competencies of primary teachers.

## 6. Conclusion

This research analyzes the theoretical framework of primary teachers' management based on competencies/professional standards for defining its nine criteria and 48 indicators according to the stages: Planning, Managing, Realization of the plan, and controlling, assessing results, and providing feedback for improvement. Then, these criteria and indicators was adapted for assessing the situation of management of primary teachers in Van Ho, Son La of Vietnam as a case study. Based on issues faced by the management of primary teachers in Van Ho, three solutions were suggested that focused on the processes of 1) Organizing development of the Van Ho primary teachers' professional standards based on the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam's professional standards; 2) Organizing development of the policy's framework for motivating and encouraging of Van Ho's primary teachers, and 3) Organizing development of primary teachers' profession based on professional standards.

The application of how to apply the above nine criteria and 48 indicators into practice is based on the Van Ho's context as it contributes to developing primary teachers' management in terms of quantity and structure as well as specialized quality to meet the directions/strategies of primary education/schools' development in different stages. Once the solutions are achieved, the Council would be disbanded and working teams under the leadership of the personnel/human resources unit of the Department of Education could take on the responsibility of ensuring up-to-date competencies for all primary teachers.

As mentioned in the third section of "Methods", it should be noted that the final report of the situation and its solution of Competencies-based Primary Teachers' Management in Van Ho was completed through additional input of the eight focus groups after the survey for the second draft and then sent to the Department of Education and 14 primary schools of Van Ho for final suggestions presented in the above fourth and fifth sections of this paper.

The results of the application of this study on competency-based primary teachers' management is limited to the Van Ho context. However, the results of this study in Van Ho could contribute to a greater understanding for primary schools in other districts of Son La as well as in other jurisdictions of Vietnam and for other developing countries experiencing difficulties in providing basic education for primary

school pupils. The study did not investigate the impact of teacher competency on student's learning. This entails a separate research program. Finally, primary teachers' management and the decentralization between the Department of Education at different levels and primary schools in different contexts should be investigated (Anastasiia, Bantash ; Koval, Viktor; Bashynska , Maryna; Kozlovtseva, Valentyna, 2020). [77]

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**Appendix.** The survey's results of situation of primary teachers' management based on professional standards in Van Ho, Son La, Vietnam and its criteria, indicators (N=500)

Note: The Questions/Indicators are labeled as "(n)" (e.g., "Question/Indicator 1" is "(1)")

Questions/Indicators' Content	%				Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4		
<b>Criterion 1 - Organizing assessment of PriTea<sup>4</sup> situation</b>						
(1) Quantity of PriTea is assessed relied on dimension of pupils and its rate of number of pupil a primary teacher as regulated by the Van Ho's DoE <sup>5</sup> in different stages	5.00	30.60	24.60	39.80	2.99	0.952
(2) Structure of PriTea is assessed focused on characteristics and regulations of the Van Ho's DoE in different stages	7.00	14.20	18.20	60.60	3.32	0.962
(3) Quality/Competency of PriTea is assessed based on the ProfStand <sup>6</sup> regulated by the Van Ho's DoE in different stages	23.20	32.40	19.40	25.00	2.46	1.102
(4) Strengths, weaknesses and their causes of PriTea are resulted from scanning internal environment in different stages	9.40	27.60	30.80	32.20	2.86	0.978
(5) Opportunities and challenges of PriTea are resulted from scanning external environment in different stages	3.00	9.80	42.80	44.40	3.29	0.762
(6) Active and responsible participation of all relating stakeholders is assured in organizing the assessment of PriTea in different stages	7.20	10.20	42.60	40.00	3.15	0.876

<sup>4</sup> *PriTea* - Primary Teachers;

<sup>5</sup> *DoE* - Department of Education

<sup>6</sup> *ProfStand* - Professional Standards

**Criterion 2 - Planning development of PriTea:**

(7) The plan of PriTea's development is designed to satisfy requirements for achieving directions/strategies of PriEdu/Sch <sup>7</sup> and school network's development in different stages	5.00	19.60	27.40	48.00	3.18	0.919
(8) The quantity and structure of PriTea are defined based on analyzing and comparing forecasts of pupil's size and development of PriSch networks in different stages	7.20	18.80	27.00	47.00	3.14	0.964
(9) The ProStand of PriTea resulted from analyzing the working position of Van Ho's PriTea as compared with the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam's ProfStand in different stages	26.40	24.40	23.40	25.80	2.49	1.139
(10) Active and responsible participation of all relating stakeholders is assured in planning of PriTea's development in different stages	13.00	15.00	32.00	40.00	2.99	1.035
(11) The plan is public and accessible to all relating stakeholders in different stages	10.80	11.20	32.60	45.40	3.13	0.992

**Criterion 3 - Managing design of components of PriTea management based on ProfStand:**

(12) The components of PriTea's management are designed not only based on but also attaining to the ProfStand in different stages	13.00	19.40	31.20	36.40	2.91	1.035
(13) The components are consistent with each other in different stages	9.20	17.40	23.00	50.40	3.15	1.013
(14) The components are connected with each other for realizing successfully the plan in different stages	7.20	15.80	23.00	54.00	3.24	0.965
(15) A mechanism designed to assure close cooperation between unites/personal relating to PriTea management in different stages	13.00	11.60	25.80	49.60	3.12	1.058
(16) The above components and mechanism are regulated and public, accessible to all stakeholders in different stages	11.20	18.20	28.60	42.00	3.01	1.026

**Criterion 4 - Managing recruitment of PriTea based on ProfStand:**

(17) New needs in quantity for PriTea's recruitment are defined in relevant with the plan and realistic demands of PriEdu/Sch in different stages	12.60	17.00	33.40	37.00	2.95	1.021
(18) New needs in structure for PriTea's recruitment are identified accord with the plan and realistic demands of PriEdu/Sch as well as regulations of Van Ho DoE in different stages	13.40	19.20	30.60	36.80	2.91	1.044
(19) Requirements/criteria for recruiting new PriTea are designed based on the ProfStand in different stages	11.20	14.80	34.00	40.00	3.03	0.999

<sup>7</sup> PriEdu/Sch -Primary Education/School

(20) Different technics (writing, interviewing, testing teaching...) are used for recruiting new PriTea in different stages	16.40	11.20	35.00	37.40	2.93	1.068
(21) Assuring the best new PriTea is selected to meet the PriTea's ProfStand in different stages	17.20	12.80	32.20	37.80	2.91	1.090
(22) The processes of recruiting new PriTea are realized fairly and realizably in different stages	11.20	12.60	47.20	29.00	2.94	0.929
(23) The above information, criteria and processes of recruitment are public and accessible to all stakeholders in different stages	14.20	12.20	36.80	36.80	2.96	1.029

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**Criterion 5- Managing PriTea's performance based on ProfStand and provide feedback for improving:**

(24) Controlling and assessing realization of PriTea (strengths, weaknesses and causes) are based on ProfStand in different stages	9.00	29.60	30.60	30.80	2.83	0.968
(25) Controlling and assessing the PriTea's realization are based not only on their achievements (what), but also levels of competencies/ProfStand used (how) in different stages	15.60	27.00	27.40	30.00	2.72	1.057
(26) Criteria, indicators for controlling and assessing are managed to build based on targets as well as ProfStand of PriTea in different stages	13.00	16.80	35.60	34.60	2.92	1.015
(27) The above information from controlling and assessing is provided for PriTea and relating stakeholders for improving on time in different stages	12.60	14.40	38.40	34.60	2.95	0.997

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**Criterion 6 - Managing development of the motivated and encouraged policy framework for PriTea:**

(28) The policies' framework for motivating and encouraging PriTea is developed adequately and achievable with the Van Ho's context in different stages	15.40	41.00	26.40	17.20	2.45	0.950
(29) Active and responsible participation of all relating stakeholders is assured in processes of developing the policies' framework's in different stages	4.80	28.00	28.40	38.80	3.01	0.928
(30) The above framework are public and accessible to all stakeholders for improving in different stages	4.60	4.60	34.20	56.60	3.43	0.784

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**Criterion 7 - Managing development of profession of PriTea based on ProfStand in Van Ho:**

(31) Defining training, fostering needs and designing its respective courses for PriTea's profession development are managed to compare their current competencies with the ProfStand in different stages	4.60	4.60	34.20	56.60	2.41	1.033
(32) Policies for supporting and encouraging self-studying and attending the courses for professional development by PriTea are developed relevantly and feasibly with the Van Ho's context in different stages	23.40	30.00	29.80	16.80	2.40	1.023
(33) Active and responsible participation of all relating stakeholders in the above processes is assured in different stages	24.60	30.80	28.00	16.60	2.37	1.029

(34) External resources (communities, managing levels) are mobilized and used effectively for developing PriTea's profession in different stages	25.20	29.80	25.40	19.60	2.39	1.066
(35) These above processes are regulated/ documented and public as well as accessible to all relating stakeholders in different stages	7.20	8.60	34.60	49.60	3.27	0.895

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**Criterion 8 - The system of controlling and assessing results of PriTea's management based on ProfStand:**

(36) Objectives, criteria, guidelines of the system of controlling, assessing PriTea's management based on ProfStand are relevant with objectives, tasks and contents of PriTea's activities in different stages	7.00	18.20	24.20	50.60	3.18	0.967
(37) Fair and opening are kept well in running the system of controlling and assessing in different stages	11.20	17.00	22.80	49.00	3.10	1.049
(38) The components of PriTea's management are regularly self, internal and external assessed in different stages	9.00	18.20	32.60	40.20	3.04	0.972
(39) Active and responsible participation of all relating stakeholders is assured in the above activities in different stages	12.80	19.20	28.20	39.80	2.95	1.050
(40) Schedule and frequency rate of the above controlling and assessing are organized relevant in different stages	13.00	15.60	27.20	44.20	3.03	1.058
(41) The above activities are regulated/ documented and public as well as accessible to all stakeholders in different stages	10.80	14.00	36.80	38.40	3.03	0.978

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**Criterion 9 - Providing feedback for improving:**

(42) Information of the controlling and assessing reflect exactly PriTea's activities in different stages	13.40	16.80	27.20	42.60	2.99	1.064
(43) Information of the controlling and assessing is provided on time for self-assessing and improving by PriTea in different stages	12.60	17.00	28.40	42.00	3.00	1.047
(44) Assuring of creating convenient opportunities for judging and/or complaining the results of controlling and assessing by PriTea in different stages	15.80	15.20	29.80	39.20	2.92	1.083
(45) Information of the controlling and assessing is used efficiently for improving the plan as well as realization of PriTea's development in different stages	9.00	15.20	32.80	43.00	3.10	0.967

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**Final results of PriTea's management based on ProfStand in Van Ho:**

(46) The quality of PriTea aligns with the ProfStand for realizing successfully the directions/ strategies of Van Ho PriEdu/Sch's development in different stages	6.40	11.20	29.40	53.00	3.29	0.903
(47) The quality of PriTea satisfies with its ProfStand for realizing successfully the directions/strategies of Van Ho PriEdu/Sch's development in different stages	22.80	30.80	27.40	19.00	2.43	1.041
(48) The structure of PriTea is relevant with requirements of realizing successfully the directions/strategies of Van Ho PriEdu/Sch's development in different stages	7.80	10.80	29.00	52.40	3.26	0.937

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