



Current Situation of Building and Development of Ethnic Minority Staff in Vietnam

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Abstract

As a multi-ethnic country, the Party and the State of Vietnam have always determined that ethnic affairs and national solidarity have a huge significant position. Building a contingent of ethnic minority staff in the political system remains one of the solutions to realize equality and solidarity among ethnic groups. The recent building of ethnic minority staff has been paid special attention and achieved certain remarkable results. The quality of ethnic minority staff has been increasingly improved. This importantly contributes to the socio-economic development of Vietnam in the upcoming years.

Introduction

Ethnic minority staff plays an extremely important role in the political system, representing the solidarity strength of the Vietnamese ethnic communities, directly contributing to the inclusion of the Communist Party's guidelines and the State's policies and laws in the lives of people of multiple ethnicities. Thus, for a strong, powerful, and fruitful government at all levels, it is vital to pay due attention to building and developing a contingent of dynamic and creative ethnic minority staff in sufficient quantity and high quality, meeting the increasing requirements of the national renovation and global integration.

Policy in Leadership Perspective

From the leadership perspective of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the State of Vietnam has issued and directed the deployment of various policies regarding the building and development of ethnic minority staff with remarkably positive results.

The results of the survey on the Northwest, Central Highlands, and Southwest Vietnam have revealed increasing percentages of ethnic minority staff and managers at all levels, compared to the percentage of the ethnic minority population in these areas. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs' data, by 2020, there were roughly 64,560 ethnic minority staff members nationwide, accounting for 12.2% of the total number of staff members nationwide, including nearly 6,900 people at central agencies (5%) and 57,660 people in provinces and municipalities (14.83%).

Regarding qualifications, the number of skilled ethnic minority staff members was 17,600 people, accounting for 4.7% of the total number of skilled staff members nationwide. Particularly, 14,400 people (3%), 7,368 people (nearly 9.5%), and 35,500 people (8.5%) received training on political theory, state management, and professional skills, respectively. There was an increase in the percentage of ethnic minority staff with postgraduate qualifications. In the Northwest only, Lao Cai province had 6 doctors and 79 masters; and Hoa Binh province had 56 staff members with postgraduate degrees. Paralleling the increase in quantity and qualifications, the competencies and qualities of ethnic minority staff have

gradually improved, meeting the general standards of the political system at all levels (Dalton, 2013).

According to the data of the Northwest Steering Committee, Northwestern ethnic minority staff working in Party agencies and socio-political organizations accounted for 41.38%, consisting 70% for Lang Son province and 57% for Cao Bang province. In people-elected bodies, ethnic minority members took a high proportion, specifically 50% of the XIVth National Assembly's, 50.16% of provincial People's Councils', 61.78% of district People's Councils', and 72.79% of communal People's Councils'.

Central Highlands ethnic minority members accounted for 32.35% and 41.18% of the XIIth and XIVth National Assembly. In its XIIIth term, one Central Highlands ethnic minority member was taking the position of the Chairman of the National Assembly's Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs.

The analysis of the structure of People's Councils at all levels for the term 2011-2016 figures out that ethnic minority members of provincial People's Councils accounted for 28.96%, particularly 52% of Kon Tum provincial People's Council's, 31.17% of Gia Lai provincial People's Council's, 32.94% of Dak Lak provincial People's Council's, 22% of Dak Nong provincial People's Council's, and 12.33% of Lam Dong provincial People's Councils; and that of the district, town and city levels reached 28.58%. At the grassroots level, the percentage of ethnic minority members of communal People's Councils took 37.6%; 29.06% of the composition of communal Party, administration, Fatherland Front, and mass organizations was ethnic minority people; the number of key staff members from ethnic minorities in villages and hamlets was 10,366 people, reaching 28.32%. In the Party bodies, for the term 2015 - 2020, 18.50%, 17.11%, and 18.99% were, in turn, the rates of ethnic minority staff in the provincial, district, and grassroots Party Committees.

The advancement of ethnic minority staff is thanks to the diligent care, leadership, direction, and financial investment of the Party and the State of Vietnam, central and local departments, ministries, disciplines, and localities in training, fostering and improving professional qualifications, skills and political theory for ethnic minority staff. Also, this illustrates the outstanding self-improvement of ethnic minorities to exercise their ethnic equality rights. It is the proper recruitment, training and employment of staff that have facilitated ethnic minority staff in promoting their intelligence and enthusiasm to fulfill their political assignments. Ethnic minority staff has made a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of ethnic minority areas and the success of the national renewal (Froy & Pyne, 2011; Tikly et al., 2005).

Structure of Ethnic Minority

Notwithstanding the remarkable achievements, the building of ethnic minority staff still has certain limitations and shortcomings. The structure of ethnic minority staff remains uneven among all levels, Party and State agencies, and disciplines, specifically:

Firstly, the ratio of ethnic minority staff to the national population remains low. Most of the mountainous provinces are currently unable to self-arrange their staff and have to rely on staff mobilization and support from the central government and other localities. Most titles of leaders and managers in mountainous and remote districts are still mainly held by staff mobilized from other localities. According to the data of the Northwest Steering Committee, by 2020, despite 66.35% of the Northwestern population were ethnic minorities, ethnic minority staff in the district Party agencies and mass organizations only took 41.38%, particularly 20% in Son La province (percentage of ethnic minorities: 84%) and 31% in Dien Bien province (percentage of ethnic minorities: 84%); At the grassroots level, there were 52%

of communal staff members and part-timers being ethnic minorities. Gia Lai province has nearly 50% of the population being ethnic minorities. However, there were only 5,830 ethnic minority staff members out of a total of nearly 34,900 staff members throughout the province, accounting for 16.7% (including 5,600 people in the State sector and 210 people in the Party, Fatherland Front, and mass organization sector). This shortage of ethnic minority staff has significantly influenced the leadership of the local political system, especially regarding socio-economic development in the extremely disadvantageous localities (Kaplan, 2008).

Secondly, the inconsistent qualifications of ethnic minority staff have been discovered. There are few ethnic minority staff obtaining graduate degrees in localities while a majority have graduated from intermediate schools (Johnson et al., 2014). In the Northwest, the ratio of ethnic minority graduates to Kinh ones is 1:12. The number of professional staff members from ethnic minorities is 4 times fewer than that from the Kinh group. In the Central Highlands, there are nearly three thousand ethnic minority staff members at the communal level without standard professional qualifications, accounting for 19%; Over 5,250 people or 34% have not met the standard of political theory. In Lang Son province, for the term 2016-2020, nearly 40% of ethnic minority staff and public servants did not meet the standards by title.

There has remained a limited number of ethnic minority staff receiving training and fostering courses to improve their professional qualifications, political theories, and State management skills. In terms of professional qualifications, at the provincial People's Council level, the percentages of staff members with graduate or higher degrees, and lower degrees are 77.26% and 22.74%, respectively; at the provincial People's Committee level, such rates are in turn 87.36% and 12.64%. Likewise, at the district People's Council levels, the percentages of staff members with graduate or higher degrees reaches a lower rate of 45.63% while those with lower degrees account for 54.37%; staff at the communal People's Council level obtaining graduate degrees remains in a modest number, accounting for only 5.87%; Meanwhile, the qualifications of staff in villages and hamlets are much lower.

Thirdly, the unbalanced structure of ethnic minority staff at all levels among Party and State agencies and disciplines has been observed. Shortcomings in working positions have also been identified in the structure of ethnic minority staff (Razzak et al., 2021). There is a large concentration of ethnic minority staff, especially local ones, in the fields of mass mobilization or Party work. Few ethnic minority staff is engaged in management, administration, or professional areas (e.g., economic management, justice, cadastral work, and accounting).

Fourthly, ethnic minority staff has limited and mismatching competencies compared to their duties. The results of the survey conducted in the Northwest, Central Highlands, and Southwest show that the awareness, leadership, and management of ethnic minority staff have been limited and unsatisfactory to the requirements and duties. Given challenges from the market mechanism and the requirements of socio-economic development, national goals, and construction of new rural areas in the Northwest, Southwest, and Central Highlands, ethnic minority staff has showcased their weaknesses and limitations such as weak concretization of directives and resolutions of superiors, formulation of local programs and plans; inadequate management, inability to persuade people to change the old farming thinking, as well as failure to boldly apply science and technology to animal husbandry and cultivation; Some ethnic minority staff members seem to be reticent in changing their thinking and dependent on their superiors; They work mainly based on their experience, with little application of trained knowledge in practice.

These limitations and weaknesses are caused by the following reasons. From an objective viewpoint, it is the self-esteem and fear of going far away and taking long-term study that

inhibit their professional development. Subjectively, there is a mismatch between the training and the employment needs; Training and fostering plans have not yet met practical requirements; Also, the training and fostering content, programs and methods are matters to be reconsidered. Furthermore, improper staff planning and employment have been found in various localities; the training of ethnic minority staff has not been associated with the planning and requirements of each discipline, level, agency, unit, region, and subject; Many localities assign staff to training courses without arranging jobs after completion.

Solutions

For satisfying the national development requirements, the Party and the State of Vietnam should further focus on leading and directing the building of ethnic minority staff in the coming time. From the practical requirements, the following major solutions are proposed:

Firstly, keep improving the mechanism of recruitment, employment and management of ethnic minority staff. Accordingly, the Law on Staff and Public Servants and its guiding documents should be provided. Priority entitlements and policies for ethnic minority staff should be deployed in a proper, complete and effective manner (Oakland, 2011). Specific policies on recruitment, rank rise and promotion, training and fostering, standards and conditions for the planning and appointment of leadership and management titles for staff should be considered to be developed and amended properly. Benefits and policies concerning talent attraction and retention, salary and social insurance should be issued properly for talented people in public service and professional activities (Iqbal et al., 2017; Schlechter et al., 2014).

Secondly, promote training and fostering for staff. Accordingly, it is necessary to keep new training, refreshing and fostering activities to consolidate and enhance professional qualifications and working skills for ethnic minority staff. Moreover, specific mechanisms and policies to provide ethnic minority students with transfer programs from boarding high schools, preparatory schools to graduate and postgraduate levels.

Thirdly, effectively implement policies on talent attraction and retention, and sourcing, training and fostering of ethnic minority staff. These policies for ethnic minority staff help motivate and encourage them to devote and committed to their work, and strive, cultivate and improve their capabilities in all aspects at the same time. Intellectual and talent training programs for ethnic minorities are really needed to send outstanding young people from ethnic minorities to study abroad and access new technologies and knowledge for local development later on. Also, there should be mechanisms and policies to receive and recruit young generations of ethnic minorities. It is proposed to promptly amend and issue policies on appropriate remuneration for ethnic minority staff, especially those in remote, isolated and extremely disadvantageous areas. Regular inspection, assessment and review are beneficial to promptly propose solutions to constantly improve the qualifications and competencies of ethnic minority staff, in line with the circumstance of each ethnic minority area.

Finally, enhance the efficiency of the building and sourcing of ethnic minority staff in a fundamental and long-term way. Therefore, the ethnic minority enrollment targets of universities, colleges, professional intermediate schools and vocational training schools in the Northern mountainous region, the Central Highlands and the Southwest region should be adjusted and specified to create and develop ethnic minority staff resources. There must be a consensus between training institutions and employers according to job positions to ensure effective implementation. The staff training contents and programs should be renewed to both ensure national consistency and suit the characteristics of ethnic minority areas.

Conclusion

It is the responsibility of the Party, State and organizations with the Vietnamese political system to build and develop a contingent of ethnic minority staff. For this contingent to meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization, synchronization is the core to all stages of staff work, besides the synergy of organizations in the political system, the consensus of the people, especially ethnic minorities in the territory of Vietnam.

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