

УДК 378

DOI: 10.24044/sph.2017.2.14

## SOME SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE QUALIFICATION OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AT VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract.** Solutions to improve qualification of the head of department include: organizing research among university managers about the role and need of the head of department; designing the head of department qualification improvement plan; establishing appointment mechanism of the head of department; fostering the capacity of management and leadership for the head of department in order to meet requirements of radical and comprehensive innovation in the higher education; developing standards of the head of department; motivating to work to promote the role of the head of department in the radical and comprehensive reform in the higher education

**Keywords:** Higher education; Vietnamese university; head of department; qualification improvement.

The head of department plays an important role in assuring quality of training and scientific research by designing speciality training, advising the faculty and university on management, training faculty management and students. Thus, qualification of the head of department at university should be improved regularly in order to meet requirements of innovation in the higher education and international integration.

### Solutions for qualification improvement of the head of department

#### 1. Research the role and need to improve qualification of the head of department

*1.1. Increase awareness of university managers of the role of the head of department at university.*

One of the reasons why managers at university have not properly recognized the position and role of the head of department is that qualification improvement is limited. Therefore, it is necessary to organize discussions and conversations among managers at university to receive an agreement on the following issues:

- Department is a basic unit of university and a component of the faculty. At the same time it is a place to implement directly teaching, training, scientific research and technology exchange.

- The head of department is responsible for organizing and performing department's duties. Efficiency of teaching, scientific research, and technology transfer of the department depends largely on management and the head of department.

- Qualification of the head of department and teaching staff must be improved to improve quality of teaching.

*1.2. Determining responsibilities of managers at university for qualification improvement of the head of department.*

Managers at university have to see clearly their responsibilities in developing departments and improving quality of the head of department. They have to foster evaluation, screening, and enable the heads of department to promote their roles.

#### 2. Plan the head of department qualification improvement.

*2.1. Identifying basic principles for appointing, training and qualification improvement of the head of department at university is based on:*

- Resolution of the Government on the substantial and comprehensive renewal of Vietnam's tertiary education in the 2006 – 2020 period № 14/2005/NQ-CP dated November 2, 2005 [2].

- Program on development of pedagogy sector and schools from 2011 to 2020.

- The strategy of educational development from 2011–2020 sets out a target that there should be 100 % lecturers who have a master degree; 25 % lecturers having PhDs; and 100 % lecturers should be fluent in a foreign language [3].

- University regulations.

- University development plan.

*2.2 Qualification improvement plan of the head of department in a scientific process.*

The process includes steps as following:

**Step 1.** Surveying departments to collect information about the head of department. Surveying should take into account the following aspects: political and moral qualities; teaching capacity; scientific research capacity; management and leadership capacity; capacity of social activities and technological and scientific services to the community; capacity of international cooperation in higher education. Universities should develop standards for managers including standards for the head of department which should become basis for implementation of staff qualification improvement plan.

**Step 2.** Analyzing data gathered about the head of department to find out strengths and weaknesses.

**Step 3.** Based on the actual situation in each department, each university should have plan for development and qualification improvement plan of the head of department.

**Step 4.** It needs to determine general objectives of qualification improvement plan of the head of department in the period 201 – 2020, 2020–2025 and next years; works/activities to be implemented; guaranteed resources [1].

### **3. Establish mechanism for the head of department appointment**

Due to the functions and tasks of the head of department they not only have capacity of teaching and scientific research, but also have a capacity of management and leadership in higher education. To choose and appoint the head of department in faculties to

meet requirements of teaching, scientific research and leadership, higher education management, social activities, international integration in higher education, the following tasks should be performed:

*1. Identification of requirements, standards for the head of department.*

a) the head of department has to have enough rates for a faculty such as teaching and scientific research experience, capacity of management, doctorate degree;

b) the head of department is appointed for 5 years following the dean's position and may be reappointed;

c) appointment process implementation.

**Step 1.** The faculty organizes a team to receive a cover letter for the head of department.

**Step 2.** To organize getting a cover letter by ballot way.

**Step 3:** To check letter.

**Step 4:** To make a presentation to the Rector.

**Step 5:** To make appointment decision.

The faculty/chair needs to develop a plan about management replacements including the heads and deputy of the heads of department. And then, to determine the number of heads and deputy of the heads of department, and requirements to their qualities and capacity in the context of higher education innovation [7].

*4. Fostering and improving the capacity of management and leadership for the head of department to meet requirements of fundamental and comprehensive renewal in higher education.*

The goal of fostering and improving the capacity of the head of department is equipping, updating, improving knowledge, skills, and methods of performing to implement duties of the head of department in new context; to improve quality and capacity of leadership and management in educational activities, scientific research, technology transfer and international integration of faculty.

Fostering must be carried out flexibly with many measures such as administration, motivation, encouragement. It must be managed and implemented scientifically; ensured closely from the analysis of fostering demand

to development of fostering content, plan of fostering, to the evaluation of fostering results. In our opinion, fostering capacities of

the head of department should follow the process as in the diagram below:

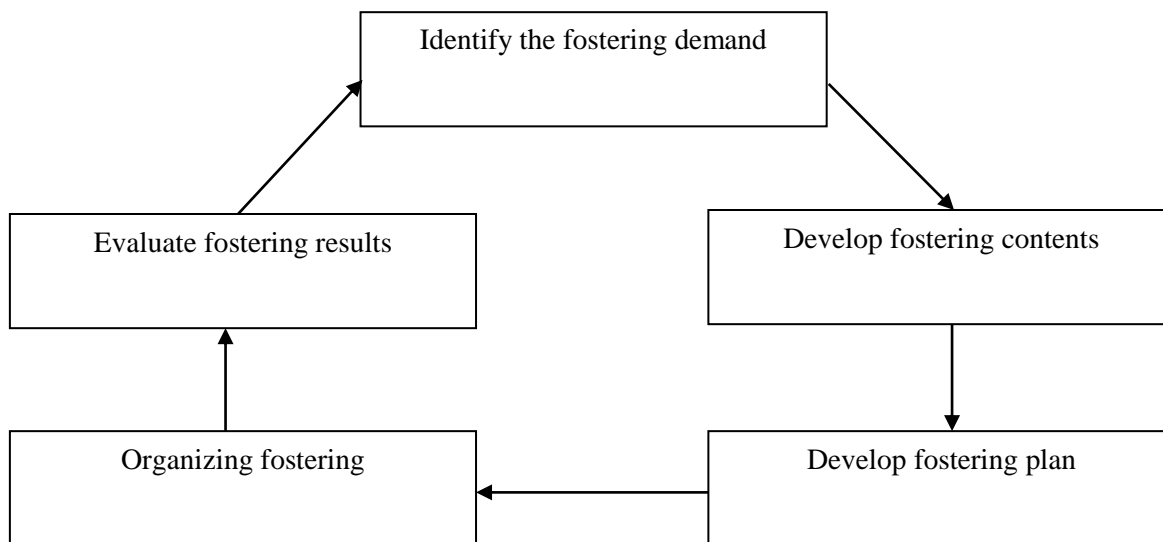


Figure 1. Process of fostering capacities of the head of department

### 5. Develop fostering capacities plan of the head of department

Regarding to the practical demands of fostering capacities of the head of department, strategic plan, school year plans, financial capacity, universities actively develop annual training plans, including: objectives, requirements, contents, fostering methods, time, funding, responsibilities of related organizations and individuals as a basis for fostering implementation. Training faculties should conduct fostering plans for the head of department following 4 steps as below:

**Step 1.** To determine the demands of fostering for each head of department.

**Step 2.** To orient selection of contents, programs, and methods of suitable fostering for each head of department.

**Step 3.** To develop funding, propose time and location for fostering.

**Step 4.** To submit to the Rector for approval.

### 6. Renewal organization of fostering capacities of the head of department.

Fostering follows the way from the top to down. This is a usual way in order to help the head of department grasp major guidelines of the Party and State about education, innovation in higher education, directives, and plans of Ministry of Education and Training for sectors and universities. In our opinion, it should be carried out by the heads of department or school clusters to foster them directly.

At the same time fostering follows the way from the bottom to up. It is based on the needs of the head of department as they will foster what they need, or what they are lack of.

At the beginning of the school year the head of department registers contents and plans of self-fostering to the faculty/school. Results of self-fostering are a criterion to plan, use, and evaluate the head of department.

In our opinion for the head of department it should be combined with students-oriented methods and self-fostering. Thus, we propose a fostering process that includes steps as below:

**Step 1.** To hand out training materials, preliminary guidance for the head of department about contents.

**Step 2.** The head of department should study materials by themselves.

**Step 3.** To organize the head of department to exchange training materials of each school and each cluster.

**Step 4.** To focus on contents that the head of department is not yet clear about, agree via self-study and exchange.

**Step 5.** To organize studying contents that the head of department is unclear or disagrees in the fostering materials.

To meet requirements of modern education heads of department need to be fostered in various forms such as:

**Regular fostering:** regular fostering is implemented by various ways such as self-study, self-fostering in educational practice, attending seminars, participating in short-term training courses. Also it includes studying management experience of some countries in the region and the world. Self-study and self-fostering are the most basic fostering ways via practical activities about department management. The head of department has to learn lessons and overcome the disadvantages.

**Focused fostering:** to foster systematically to improve the level of heads of department who are not yet qualified about management level, political and theoretical aspects. It may be focused on continuous learning or learning of each part. When learners accumulate enough certificates for modules, they will get a certification.

### **7. Innovation in evaluating results of the head of department**

Along with the renewal about contents, methods, and forms of fostering the heads of department, it is necessary to renovate the evaluation of fostering results for the head of department.

In our opinion, it is necessary to evaluate two aspects. First, it is awareness of the head of department of issues that are fostered. Second, the ability to apply knowledge and

skills, that are fostered in leadership, direction, and management.

Forms such as self-assessment, evaluations of department, faculty/school, students' assessment could be used.

Results of evaluation shall be kept in their profile, which shall serve as a basis for developing plans for training, fostering, rotation, and appointment the head of department.

### **8. Developing standards for the head of department at university to meet requirements of innovation in higher education.**

Referring to theoretical research and the above mentioned, we suggest 7 standards for the head of department at university and 36 criteria in detail:

Standard 1. Political qualities and occupation ethics include 5 criteria.

Standard 2. Professional competence and pedagogical profession include 5 criteria.

Standard 3. Capacity of scientific research includes 5 criteria

Standard 4. Capacity of leadership includes 6 criteria

Standard 5. Capacity of management includes 9 criteria.

Standard 6. Capacity of social action and provision of educational, scientific and technological services to the community includes 3 criteria.

Standard 7. Capacity of international integration in higher education includes 3 criteria.

Standards for the head of department is an important base to managers to assess, plan, appoint, train, foster the head of department effectively. At the same time, standards for the head of department is a key base for them to self-fulfillment in order to meet standards, new requirements, and tasks in higher education innovation and international integration.

### **9. Creating motivation for the head of department**

#### **Developing an efficient working environment for the head of department.**

At university motivation of the head of department depends on many factors both physical and mental. All levels of manage-

ment from school to the faculty should pay attention to creating and nurturing elements that create motivation of the head of department. These are physical and mental conditions, friendly and cooperative working environment such as allowances, incentives in teaching and scientific research; provision and use of equipments and laboratories; comprehensive and modern practice; fostering to improve professional skills and capacity of management in internal and external universities; support and facilitation in application of the advanced training methods and technologies; developing culture of quality at school, faculty, and department.

**Developing a reward mechanism for policies' implementation for the head of department.**

In order to implement emulation and reward to create a working motivation for the head of department, universities should implement:

- standards of emulation and reward: it is specified to monitor all managing activities of the head of department;
- process of emulation and reward consideration: to demonstrate publicity, to keep abreast of objectives and practices;
- forms of emulation and reward: to motivate typical emulation and devotion; rewards from all levels, branches, and localities; commendations, certificates of merits and titles such as "Excellent staff at all levels", "Talented management"[4];
- evaluation of emulation and reward: fairness, publicity and democracy; evaluations base on quality and effectiveness of performance;
- combining merit with reward, mental motivation with physical benefits in the emulation and reward for the head of department.

It is necessary to determine the relationship between individual reward and collective and unit reward for the head of department achievements. Collective commendation and personal reward create conditions to promote each other, to create a motivation to

improve quality of training and scientific research.

It is necessary to improve and promote efficiency of emulation and commendation for the head of department, to attach the results of emulation and commendation to evaluate and classify the head of department with increasing salary, appointing, suggesting new positions.

It needs to pay attention to relationship between emulation and reward with improvement of qualification via the following forms: standardization of doctoral degree, titles of associate professor, professor; study information technologies, foreign languages, programs of administrative and educational management.

**Heads of department are involved in developing regimes and policies**

Policies for teachers and educational managers are developed and finalized by experts and senior agencies of the Party and the State, but they must be consulted and attended by a large number of management staff in general, and heads of department in particular. Without such involvements, policies will not have a good feedback, will not adhere to reality, and will not uphold the power of heads of department who are not only subjects, but are also objectives of policies in order to improve qualification of the head of department.

**To expand international cooperation to train, foster and exchange staff.**

To expand international cooperation to train and exchange the head of department, universities should implement the following measures:

*To continue to maintain existing partnerships with universities and international organizations.*

Now Vietnamese universities have international relations with many universities all over the world in terms of training, scientific research, improving teachers' qualification, development of programs to improve facilities, equipments, and document flow for library and information systems [6].

*To develop and promulgate a policy mechanism that facilitates development of new relationships with universities and international organizations to improve qualification of the head of department.*

Establishing new relationships with universities and international organization for the development of the head of department is one of the key tasks that universities should identify in the plan of school development.

To achieve this focal task, the following mechanisms and policies that facilitate development of new relationships with universities and international organizations are offered:

a) to develop mechanisms, policies of the faculty exchange and the head of department among universities in the world;

b) to organize exchange and study programs at some foreign universities;

c) to send heads and deputy of the heads of department to do PhD courses or Master's programs in some foreign universities by using funding from projects or the bilateral agreement between two universities;

d) to improve cooperation with universities in the region and world to exchange management experience, academic exchange, scientific research, and foster to improve qualification of the head of department.

e) to develop mechanisms to support the head of department to participate in bidding, signing scientific research subjects in the form of bilateral cooperation and the protocol.

### **Conclusion**

The head of department plays a key role in developing and improving the faculty to meet requirements of training, qualification

improvement, and scientific research. They advise the faculty and university on management of majors, training majors, lecturers, and students. That requires us to develop and improve qualification of the head of department constantly. To develop an effective head of department, we need to implement those solutions in above simultaneously.

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