

## LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY OF LEADER WOMEN AT HIGH SCHOOLS: RESEARCH IN BAC NINH PROVINCE, VIETNAM

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**Abstract:** *A sample of 503 teachers and managers of high schools from Bac Ninh province were surveyed to analyse the current situation of leader women's leadership competency. The paper used the descriptive and deductive statistics approach to analyse the research result after having surveyed by questionnaire and interview. The paper discusses three components of leader women's leadership competency: be, know and do (basing on the original model of leader competency of Bass, 1990). The research result showed that those components of the competency affected the effectiveness of the school. However, the leadership actions had the greatest impact, and the followings were leadership traits and knowledge. All the things were practical base to make measures of improving the leadership competency for leader women.*  
*Keywords: Competency, leadership competency, leader women at high schools.*

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### **Introduction**

Leader women are considered as the heart of schools because of the perceived and actual influence of them and their importance to school growth. Concern for this staff has been being remained for years. There have also been opinions of leadership competency for years. However, the paper focuses on three factors related to leader women's leadership competency: be, know and do (BKD). This has been the model of leadership competency of the U.S by Bass since 1990 [according to 1], [5], [10] and has been developed until now.

The paper will answer the following research questions: i) how many components does leader women' leadership competency have?, ii) Are there any differences in evaluation on components of leader women' leadership competency between themselves and their superiors and subordinators? How leader women' competency impacts on school performance?

Therefore, the paper is to focus on the following main objectives: Identifying components of leadership competency of school leader women; Analyzing leader women' leadership

competency and testing the impact level of components of their leadership competency on school performance.

To discuss the purpose of the study, the research scope is stated. The paper focuses on examining components of leadership competency of leader women to school performance in Bac Ninh province, Vietnam. The study use the model of leadership competency of the U.S (started by Bass, 1900 and developed by many other authors).

## **Literature Review**

In years, there have been researches on leadership competency. However, the paper focuses mainly on researches into be, know and do (BKD).

*Be - At the trait side*, trait theory points out characteristics combined with leader success. Stogdill (1948, 1974) recognized traits with leaders as followed: intelligence, responsibility, self-confidence, socialability, alertness insight, initiativeness, persistence. And there were ten traits positively affecting leadership competency: responsibility, persistence, risk taking, self-confidence, sensitive, cooperativeness, Lord et al.(1986) found intelligent, influenced, manly were traits of leaders. Marlove (1986) found emotional intelligence (EI) could help leaders understand other's behaviour and emotion so that they could act well. Kirpatrick and Locke (1991) pointed out leaders were different from others in confidence, understanding tasks, cognitive ability, integrity, inspire ability and enthusiasm. These traits may be borned or made and they can help us realize leaders. Smith and Foti (1998) showed the leadership traits like intelligence, self-confidence, exception. Mumford, et al (2000) showed 3 traits leading to leadership competency which were challenging the difficult and using it as chances to develop, influence, social commitment [according to 9]. In conclusion, there had been many traits which were studied such as: intelligence, manly, responsibility, trust worthy, assertive, bravery, creativeness, meticulousness, openness, compassion, ... And, the above researches identified typical characteristic of leaders including traits. They showed that traits impacts their leadership effectiveness. The researches on Know and Do also showed like that.

*Know - At the side of leadership knowledge*, Schein (1996) said that leadership competency included cognitive ability, the ability of understanding himself and the world around, the motivation to learn and to change, emotional ability to self-manage and to manage others, the ability of analyzing the effect of culture especially positive effect of culture on leadership, empowered by competency and encouraging leadership based on the subordinators' participation. House (1996) and Howard (1995) said that leadership competency was about the ability of recognizing limitation, analyzing and coordinating toward the goals. Bass (1999), Zaccaro, et al (1991) said that leadership competency related to social knowledge likes communication, persuasion, negotiation, training, conflict management. Researchers likes Connelly et al. (2000), Kanungo & Misra (1992), Katz Kahn (1978), Lau, Newman, & Broedling (1980), Mahoney Jerdee, & Carroll (1965), Mintzberg (1973), Mumford, Marks,

Connelly, Zaccaro, & Reiter Palmon (2000), Zaccaro (2001) focused on leaders' tasks with knowledge instead of traits [13], [15].

*Do - At the side of leadership actions*, leadership traits and knowledge are considered as the "Necessary condition" and the leadership actions are the "Sufficient". The leadership actions depend on the specific situation and context. There have been lots of researches on leadership shifted from leadership traits to leadership actions like behavioral theory. Avolio et al. (2004), Judge & Piccolo (2004) showed that there is positive relation between transformational leadership and school performance in any contexts and at any levels of leadership. The person with transformational leadership style is focused by his actions in practice. The third component of leadership competency depends on the specific context of the organization as well as specific studies and situations [17], [19].

Overview of studies in leadership competency in the world showed that there is little research combining leadership traits, knowledge and actions and its influence to school performance as well as leadership effectiveness (Avolio, 2007). Combining leadership traits and actions can explain at least 31% of the difference in leadership effectiveness [3], [4], [8], [9]. And there is also no separation between management and leadership competency in some cases. The research lacked of the literature reviews. This lead to the lack of the research base, especially in Vietnam context. Reviewing the literatures showed that no studies explore the relationship between the components of leader women's leadership competency and school performance has been done in Vietnam. Studies examining the relationship between the components of leadership competency and school performance has been done in the world but in a narrow range such as the relationship between leadership traits and school performance, leadership skills and school performance.... Especially, there have not been any researches on leader women at high schools including the last decade. So the author focused on the "gap" to complete leadership science. Based on this review, the author selected the thesis named "*Leadership competency of leader women at high schools: research in Bac Ninh province, Vietnam*".

## **Methodology**

Archival research and secondary research: this approach provides qualitative data, including published statistics, consolidated reports from organizations, relevant authorities and from other resources. In-depth interview: to understand more about components of leadership competency of school leader women in Bac Ninh province, the author interviewed 2 experts in developing school, 2 leader women. This method provides qualitative data. Survey: this methodology will help to test the hypothesized relationship.

## ***The process of research***

### *Step 1: Qualitative study*

After using archival research and secondary research, the author used the indepth interview to understand more about the research issue. It helped to propose the research model and hypotheses. Also, this information was used to design structured questionnaire more suitable. This used as the base to build the research questions to collect the ideas of school leader women and their subordinators.

### *Step 2: Quantitative study*

Survey was conducted by questionnaires and in-depth interviewing. The sample for this study was drawn from a population in Bac Ninh of Vietnam, including:

- + Respondents from 32 leader women from 15 high schools (covered a range of size, type, majority of heads and deputy-heads).
- + Respondents from 471 people who are teachers (or superiors and subordinates) of the schools.

### ***Data collection***

To survey leader women in the collected high schools, the author used the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire in this study was originally designed based on secondary research, specifically previous theoretical basis and studies. Then the author discussed in the qualitative research and edited the first time. Questionnaires are separated in 2 types, one is for leader women and the other is for their superiors and subordinates. Before conducting formal research, the author conducted a pilot test on small samples (10 people) including leader women and their superiors and subordinators to check the last editing and adjusted the second time. The last step was to conduct the official version and sent to the participants to answer questionnaires.

### ***Scales***

Most of the measures for dependent and independent variables used in this study were drawn from the literature and adapted for the Vietnam context. Most of the scales used in the study are adopted or modified from the previous researches. The items were developed based on the findings from the previous qualitative study, these scales were scored on a 5-point Likert-type format from never to very often; scales were scored on a 5-point Likert-type format from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These scales are used to measure variables: (1) leadership traits of school leader women; (2) leadership knowledge of school leader women; (3) leadership actions of school leader women. And also, the author used the scale to measure school performance.

### ***Data analysis***

The survey was piloted and a number of questions were amended or withdrawn after the pilot phase. This is the process of modifying structured questionnaires to make sure that collected information would be more exact. Data was coded and used under SPSS for Windows 22.0. The use of factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha to decipher the internal consistency of and relationships between questions within modules. Factor analysis was used to identify common components among sets of items within questionnaires. The statistical hypothesis test are applied significance level of 5%. To examine the relationship between the dependent variable with the independent variables as well as between the independent variables together to identify the multicollinearity, Pearson correlation coefficients will be used. If two variables have a linear relationship, the causal relationship of these two variables can be modeling by linear regression.

## **Results**

### ***A short description of the research sample***

*Age:* Most leader women are young (39.9% are under the age of 35, 56.1% aged from 35 to 54 and only 4% over the age of 54).

*Level of education:* 100 % of them have university degree or higher (35.3% of this have degree of master and attending a doctoral course).

*Specialized training:* Leader women were trained in various educational majors: maths, physics, chemistry, literature, history, geography, biology and languages. They also were trained in educational management unless some have been being training (3.7%).

*Operating and leading experience of leader women:* Leader women with three-years experience of managing and leading are the most percentage (40.4%), the next are 5 years, 4 years, 6 years and 10 years.

### ***Discussion about the research result***

Assessment of leader women's leadership competency by themselves and their superiors and subordinators

### *Assessment of leadership traits*

**Table 1. Leader women's leadership traits assessed by themselves their superiors and subordinators**

Items	Leader women		Superiors and subordinators	
	Mean	Std.deviation	Mean	Std.deviation
Creativity	4,47	0,79119	3,95	0,50213
Flexibility	4,56	0,70042	4,20	0,69340
Trust worthy	4,46	0,70980	4,44	0,66091
Responsibility	4,65	0,67333	4,47	0,65301
Ethics	4,49	0,72481	4,37	0,70112
Sensitiveness	4,35	0,83557	3,99	0,72010

The result showed that leader women seemed to assess themselves higher than that of the subordinators. However, the fact was that their leadership competency had been strengthened, such as:

They better understood and aware of their role especially their position and their responsibility to relevant partners inside and outside school.

Creativity was highly appreciated traits of leader women. They are very creative, innovative and hard working. Many of them work hard to build enthusiasm and school development as well as an example for subordinators.

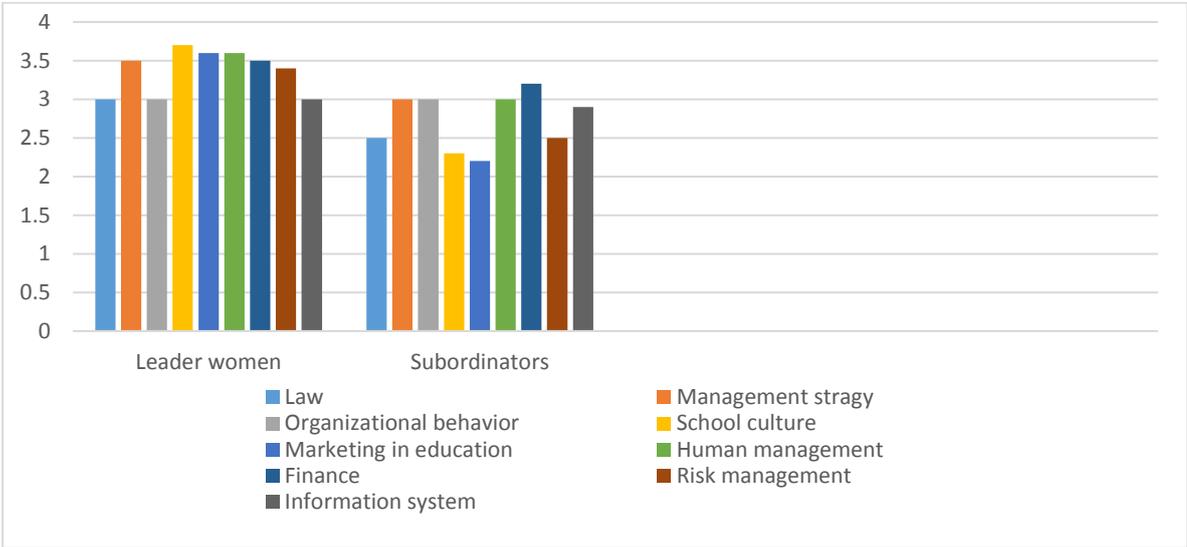
For ethics, they represented good sense of building school's values and culture as well as respected for the value of individual. They also cleared sense of getting objectives and identifying longterm strategic direction for the school. In addition, sensitivity was also the trait leader women wanted to express to "win the heart" and run the school more efficiently.

There had been a number of traits were shortaged in leader women such as limited visions.... In addition, they were still not familiar with the habit of meeting partners' expectation or actively seeking opportunities. These led to the limitation of the sensitivity to partners' expectation and opportunities of the school.

### *Assessment of leadership knowledge*

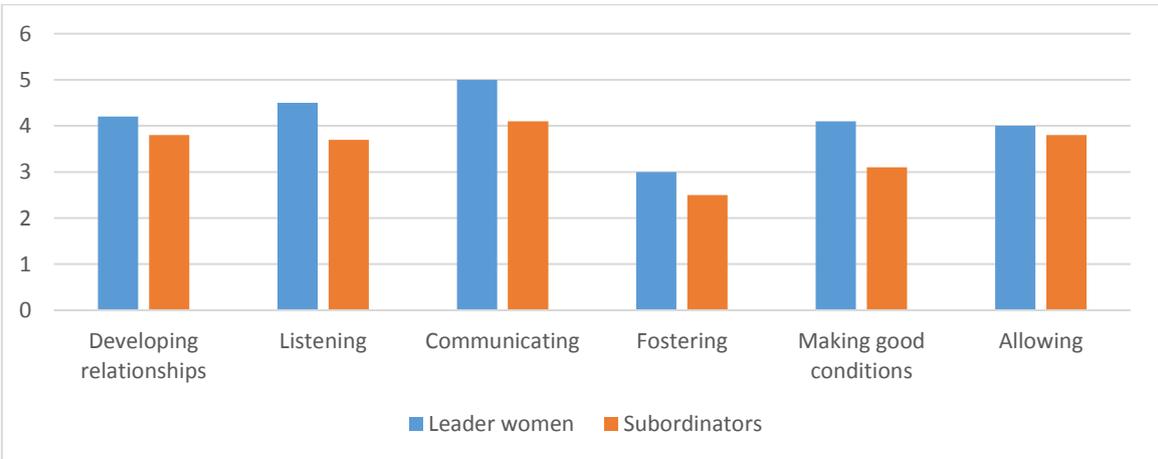
For general knowledge of leadership, the author just surveyed their general leadership knowledge and used previous research results to obtain a complete picture of leader women's leadership competency. The assessment of general leadership knowledge was putted into the questionnaire to ask them to self-assess their leadership knowledge. We mainly aimed to know whether they understood clearly about leadership or not. The results of the survey at high schools in Bac Ninh province showed that leader women did not really understand about

leadership and this prevented them from catching and transferring leadership knowledge. The question with the statement "leadership is management" getting the highest percentage level of "normal" was a clear example of it. This knowledge was the weakest one of leader women. This is the base for improving their leadership competency especially in rapid change of education. Most of the leader women's leadership knowledge were assessed at less than 3.5 points (scale of 5). Assessment of the leader women's leadership knowledge was not similar to their superiors and subordinators, especially knowledge of education strategy, risk management and corporate culture. The lack of these knowledge was also expressed in the inaccurate understanding of the nature of leading as well as effective leadership. Overall, general leadership knowledge of the leader women was still limited and these will affect on their leadership actions and leadership competency.



**Figure 1: The current situation of leader women's leadership knowledge assessed by themselves and subordinators**

*Assessment of leadership actions*



**Figure 2: The current situation of leader women's leadership actions assessed by themselves and subordinators**

Leader women clearly understood and aware of their role especially their position and responsibility with relevant partners inside and outside school. They could develop relationships well. They also especially succeeded in building relationships with internal and external partners. Therefore, they must concern to encourage employees' heart. The fact is that many leader women assigned work emotionally and did not assess employees' ability to decrease their motivation [11], [12]. As the leader, leader women also need to be able to get a target at least 4.5 points (scale of 5). However this ability was not really high. The biggest drawback of leader women goal-oriented was communication goal and educational opinions about all employees and making them understand goals of school in the same way. The leader women must concern to developing staffs for the achievement of school.

### ***Analysing the effectiveness of components of the leader women's leadership competency to school performance [14]***

#### ***Testing the variable value***

Factor analysis (EFA) is used when the KMO (Kaiser – Mayer – Olkin) value is more than 0.5 (Marija J, 1993). The results showed that KMO & Berlett value of testing is more than 0.5 and this had led to the conclusion that the scales had high value when used to measure the corresponding variables.

#### ***Evaluating the reliability of the scale***

Reliability evaluation was testing whether the scales were consistent with the corresponding variables. The statistical method used to test the reliability is coefficient Cronbach's Alpha. The testing results showed that all Cronbach's Alpha values were greater the required value of 0.6. In addition, most of Cronbach's Alpha of Item Deleted values are lower than Cronbach's Alpha and Corrected Item-Total Correlation values are greater than 0.3. Therefore, the scales in this study are highly reliable.

#### ***Correlation coefficient***

The Pearson correlation coefficient values between effectiveness of performance and BE, KNOW, DO are in the range of 0 to 1. It means the relationship between the variables is meaningful and has no abnormal signs, may continue to use other statistics to test this relationship.

#### ***ANOVA test***

The ANOVA test shows that the hypothesis is at the 0.00 significant level ( $< 0.05$ ). The regression model fits the collected data and the variables are included in the statistical significance of 5% significance level.

**Table 2:ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5903.258	1	5903.258	1603.453	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1844.477	501	3.682		
	Total	7747.735	502			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance effectiveness [16]

b. Predictors: (Constant): Be, Know, Do

*Hypothesis tests*

**Table 3. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.873 <sup>a</sup>	.762	.761	1.91875

a. Predictors: (Constant): Be, Know, Do

**Table 4. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.982	.568		7.007	.000
	Be	.630	.014	.877	44.031	.000
	Know	1.572	.095	.313	16.541	.000
	Do	.399	.136	.063	2.944	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Performance effectiveness

The result of the regression coefficient in the model shows that the meaning of all Sig. are less than 0.05. Therefore, the independent variables affect school performance. All components of leadership competency are significant and have an effect on school performance at the same side because the regression coefficients are positive. [6]

***Hypothesis test result***

The hypothesis test result shows that the beta coefficients are statistically significant. The hypothesis test summary as followed:

**Table 5. Hypothesis test summary**

Hypothesis	Result
Leader women's leadership traits are positively related to firm performance	Accepted
Leader women's leadership traits are positively related to firm performance	Accepted
Leader women's leadership traits are positively related to firm performance	Accepted

## Conclusion

The paper focused on three components of leader women's leadership competency: be, know and do. The research result showed that the key traits of leader women were identified including flexibility, sensitiveness, responsibility, ethic aspects, trust worthy,... According to the factor analysis result, the factors "honesty" and its observed variables are eliminated. This can be explained that they tend to concentrate on the traits such as flexibility and responsibility. In fact, honesty is the trait that is difficult to measure so that it should be overshadowed in feeling about leader women's leadership competency. And also, their leadership general knowledge was still limited, especially they did not really understand the nature of leadership as well as the difference between leadership and management. This can affect leader women's leadership actions and leadership competency. Among the components "BKD" of leader women's leadership competency, the leadership actions had the greatest impact, and the followings were leadership traits and knowledge.

History of leadership theory showed the debate about whether the leadership traits had made the leadership competency or not. As theory "Great man" confirmed the leader was borned because of natural talent or origin. The theory "Traits theory" gave "The element of the standard" to make leadership competency of individuals and confirmed that individuals with these traits would have leadership competency [7]. The identification of these leadership traits are valuable in detecting the leadership talent, gathering the leadership traits expected from the follower [2]. However, a person can learn how to change his personal traits to get the necessary leadership traits. The survey was done to identify leader women's leadership traits, knowledge and actions at high schools in Bac Ninh province. By identifying and understanding the traits associated with their leadership competency as well as the basic leadership knowledge and actions, leader women are able to detect and train themselves to improve and enhance their leadership competency.

We believe that with leader women's sense of self-training and suitable training programs, the attention of the Government, the Association and education departments, leader women can improve their leadership competency to lead the organizations better. [18]

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