

Original Research Article

## Factors Affecting the Construction of School Culture According to the Concept of Learning Organization at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics

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**Abstract:** Building a school culture is always a strategic goal for the sustainable development of every school today. Building an environment of cooperation, sharing, and mutual learning is the basis for creating a solid organizational culture foundation. Therefore, building a culture of learning and sharing in schools according to the concept of a learning organization is an important direction to consolidate and perfect the school culture at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics in the current context. Building a school culture according to the concept of a learning organization at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics is influenced by subjective and objective factors, from inside and outside the school. Identifying and correctly assessing the influence of these factors will help school leaders be proactive in promoting strengths and overcoming negative influences in the process of building school culture at the academy.

**Keywords:** School Culture, Learning Organization, Influencing Factors, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.

## INTRODUCTION

The Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics (Academy) is Vietnam's leading theoretical training institution, which is considered a special "school" of the Party and State of Vietnam. The school culture of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics has both common features and unique characteristics of "Party School Culture". School culture creates a stable management environment, helping to inspire, promote and develop good qualities in the field of education. School culture will help the school become a cultural and educational center, a place to concentrate intellectual strength and compassion in society, contributing to comprehensive educational products. Therefore, building school culture plays a huge role in enhancing the quality of management and education at schools.

According to the theory of "Learning Organization" (Senge, 2012), when all members of an organization learn together, that organization will become a "learning organization". To create a "lifelong learning" environment in a "learning society", schools need to be true "learning organizations", encouraging the development and linking of individual goals with organizational goals.

If school culture is approached according to the theory of learning organizations, it will help the organization promote strong cultural values such as collective cooperation, individual autonomy, systematic hierarchy and orientation of individual decisions and behaviors (Garvin, *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, building a school culture according to the concept of learning organizations at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics has practical significance in the current context of international integration.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

School culture and learning organizations are closely related, mutually reinforcing and influencing each other. On the one hand, school culture influences the ability to form and develop the characteristics of a learning organization. According to Kuh and Whitt (1988), a culture that is learning-oriented values knowledge and growth will promote the organization to become a learning organization.

On the other hand, a learning organization will also have a reverse impact on school culture. When an organization has a strong orientation towards learning and knowledge sharing, it will gradually shape the values, beliefs, norms and expectations about learning in the school culture (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). A learning organization will also create a school culture with those positive characteristics. Culture and learning organizations have a two-way relationship and influence each other (Diamantes, 2004).

Thus, it can be seen that building a school culture is important in forming and developing the characteristics of an effective learning organization. Approached from the perspective of a learning organization, the management and building of school culture need to be carried out systematically and comprehensively. The three-layer cultural model of Edgar Schein (2010) provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding and managing school culture.

Based on the three-layer cultural model of Edgar Schein (2010) and the concepts of learning organizations, we can draw the concept of building school culture according to the concept of learning organizations: the process of the school implementing policy planning and leading, influencing the cultural layers, creating a favorable environment for school members to learn and share knowledge, creating a healthy, friendly, open, creative culture in the school to help the school become a learning organization, always striving to learn, continuously innovate and develop.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted with the participation of 281 cadres in different positions of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and 671 trainees studying the Advanced Political Theory training program of the Central Academy and 04 affiliated regional Academies (Region 1, Region 2, Region 3, Region 4).

The study used a scoring scale to assess the level of opinion of the respondents on the research issues. The commonly used scoring scale in the study is a scale running from 1 to 5 points, in which 5 points represent the highest level of agreement (very influential) and 1 point is (very uninfluenced). The data was analyzed with the support of SPSS 16.0 software.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Factors Affecting the Building of School Culture According to the Concept of Learning Organization at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics

#### *Subjective Factors:*

#### *Leadership and Governance Factors in the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics:*

Leadership and governance factors play a very important, even pivotal, role in building a school culture according to the learning organization approach at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics. More specifically, the aspects of this factor affect:

- i. The Party Committee and the Board of Directors of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics are the subjects that determine the vision and clear direction for building the National Academy of Politics into a learning organization, building specific strategies with goals and action plans as the guiding principles for the entire implementation process.
- ii. The leadership style of the Party Committee and the Board of Directors of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics taking the lead with exemplary behavior in learning and innovation will create a friendly multiplication effect; openness, encouraging participation and dialogue will create a favorable environment for a culture of learning.
- iii. The Academy's governance system and policies need to be established, clearly defining the objects and management processes to encourage and motivate learning for cadres, civil servants, public employees and workers; the system of emulation and reward assessment must be linked to the capacity to learn and contribute knowledge to promote a culture of learning.
- iv. The mechanism of decentralization, information sharing and autonomy will pave the way for innovation. The Party Committee and the Board of Directors of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics need to allocate resources (finance, technology, human resources) reasonably for the work of building school culture, and at the same time proactively seek and mobilize additional resources from outside to strengthen the implementation potential to achieve the highest implementation efficiency.

Thus, the leadership and management factors have a profound impact, deciding the success or failure of building a learning organizational culture at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics. The commitment, correct recognition of the role, style and coordination ability of the leadership team is very important to create sustainable cultural change.

***Trainee Factors:***

Trainees coming to study at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics are cadres and party members who are currently in office or are planning for important positions in the political system at all levels. In the process of building a school culture according to the concept of a learning organization, trainees play an important role, because they are the direct beneficiaries and participants in the learning and innovation process of the Academy.

Trainees will be the ones who demonstrate their awareness and attitude in agreeing on the importance of building a learning organization through their positive or passive, open or closed attitudes towards learning, sharing knowledge and innovation, or whether they are ready to demonstrate their capacity to learn, research and develop their capacity during their time studying at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics or not.

At the same time, trainees' sense of responsibility in self-study and capacity improvement, and their exemplary performance in demonstrating learning values and cultural standards will inspire learning in the surrounding community. Therefore, awareness, motivation and increased participation of trainees need to be considered as important in the strategy of building a new culture.

***Human Resources in the Academy (Including Cadres, Civil Servants, Public Employees, Workers and Socio-Political Organizations, Etc.):***

Human resources within the school include the team of lecturers, civil servants, and workers, who are the ones who directly implement the direction of the leaders of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics in implementing political and working tasks. The same goes for the task of building school culture, they are the ones who directly demonstrate and spread the values and standards of learning culture in all teaching activities and communication between colleagues, but also directly with trainees through performing administrative, organizational, and management tasks for activities related to building school culture.

If lecturers, cadres, and workers have the capacity and a positive learning attitude, through their activities, they will inspire and create an effective learning environment for trainees and colleagues. On the contrary, if the human resources within the school lack innovative thinking and do not agree with the leadership, management, and governance mechanisms of the school, they will become barriers to building school culture.

Therefore, human resources within the school need to be encouraged and motivated to have team spirit and share knowledge among colleagues, and at the same time, need to be trained, raise awareness, and develop service capacity suitable for the learning organization model.

***Long-Standing Traditional Cultural Factors:***

For a school with a long-standing tradition and history of formation and development such as the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, existing cultural factors and long-standing traditions have a great influence on the process of building school culture according to the concept of a learning organization. The current school culture has been nurtured, existed and passed on through many generations of cadres, civil servants, employees and trainees. These values need to be preserved and promoted to build a new culture on the traditional foundation.

On the other hand, the old cultural system often has limitations such as bureaucracy, imposition, lack of democracy, and lack of dynamism, and is not suitable for the times. However, these are sometimes difficult to eliminate, especially for those who are used to the traditional way of working. Therefore, it takes a lot of time, an appropriate roadmap and efforts between the parties to create a new cultural transformation. In the process of building a school culture according to the concept of a learning organization, innovation, if implemented radically, will cause internal conflicts and contradictions.

With the above influences, the construction of school culture according to the concept of learning organization at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics needs to be carried out carefully, step by step but firmly, combining the transformation of new culture and preserving appropriate traditional values. It is important to change awareness and attract a consensus of cadres, civil servants, public employees, and workers based on the benefits and practical values of the learning culture.

***Tangible Cultural Factors Include Facilities and Technical Infrastructure in the Academy:***

Not only need to preserve the inherent characteristic images of the Academy such as logos, and characteristic symbols, in the process of building school culture, the leaders of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics need to pay attention to the physical environment, landscape, architecture, and common space of the Academy. It is necessary to design a working space for cadres, civil servants, public employees, and workers and a learning space for trainees to create a feeling of openness, closeness, friendliness and inspiration for learning; classrooms, libraries, and workspaces are conveniently arranged for learning, research, and knowledge exchange activities. At the same time, build a modern, stable information technology system to serve teaching and learning activities, establish modern educational technology platforms such as learning management systems, online learning systems, digital libraries, etc., to create an interactive, attractive learning environment, and effective knowledge sharing.

Modern facilities and infrastructure combined with traditional features in the working and learning environment will create favorable conditions for learning, research, and application of new technologies in teaching and management. This is an important physical environment that promotes a culture of learning and innovation. On the contrary, if it is lacking or outdated, it will become a major barrier not only for educational activities but also for building a learning organization in general.

***Objective Factors:***

***The Guidelines, Policies and Strategies of the Party and the State of Vietnam:***

As an institution for training human resources for mid- and high-level leaders of the Party and the State, the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics holds a particularly important position in the Vietnamese political system. The guidelines, policies and strategies of the Party and the State play a role in guiding and defining the goals, tasks, and methods of operation of the Academy.

In terms of advantages, the guidelines, policies and strategies of the party and the State of Vietnam has emphasized the importance of innovation in education and training, building a team of qualified and capable cadres to meet the requirements of the new period. This has become the basis and motivation for the Academy to proactively implement innovative solutions and build a culture of learning to improve the quality of training. In addition, the orientations and policies of the Party and State on human resource development, science and technology, information technology application, etc., also create a foundation for the Academy to build a learning environment, and apply modern technology to support learning organizations.

However, there are still challenging factors of some current regulations that lack flexibility and do not encourage the spirit of learning and innovation. In addition, some traditional views on education, training and fostering also need to be adjusted to suit the building of learning organizations at the National Academy of Politics.

***Globalization and Cultural Diversity, the Fourth Industrial Revolution:***

Globalization is a two-sided process, with both opportunities and challenges, both advantages and difficulties. Therefore, it is necessary to take advantage of the favorable opportunities brought by globalization and limit and overcome the challenges of this process. Globalization has significant impacts on education. Nowadays, human education has expanded and is strongly connected on a global scale. International cooperation in education and training has been promoted at an unprecedented speed. The increasingly diverse joint programs and study abroad programs have created opportunities for learners to acquire the quintessence of human knowledge, and training to become “global citizens”.

Globalization creates opportunities for countries to acquire achievements in modern education, through education to acquire the quintessence of human knowledge to serve the development of the country. The strong impact of globalization also requires countries to promote the development of their education. Therefore, this is also a challenge for education, requiring urgent fundamental and comprehensive innovation in the country’s education.

The scientific and technological revolution is taking place strongly. Faced with the dramatic changes in society brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, education must also undergo dramatic changes to provide human resources to meet the demands of the new production sector. Therefore, we need to fundamentally and comprehensively reform education to meet these demands, thereby taking advantage of the opportunities brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution to accelerate the country’s development.

The Academy needs to be a leading center in policies to actively participate in the Fourth Industrial Revolution to train generations of leaders and managers with strong political will, understanding the world and domestic political situation, the Party and State’s policies and guidelines, and at the same time being pioneers in research, application of scientific and technological advances and innovation in national development.

**Coordination of Social Forces (Interest and Coordination Between the Academy and Central Departments, Ministries, Branches, and Organizations; Local Party Committees and Authorities in Training and Fostering Activities):**

The coordination of social forces will create a favorable environment, motivation and important resources for the National Academy of Politics to effectively implement the process of building a school culture according to the concept of a learning organization, contributing to improving the quality of training and educational management. The Academy plays a role in training and fostering leaders and managers for agencies and departments from the central to local levels, so the attention and coordination from the central and local departments, ministries, branches and organizations will create favorable conditions for building school culture.

Therefore, the leaders of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics need to pay attention to and coordinate with other training institutions at home and abroad to exchange and learn from experiences in building learning organizations. This coordination creates conditions for sharing knowledge, learning resources and opportunities for research cooperation on learning culture in schools. Thereby, the Academy can continuously update new knowledge, improve innovation capacity and build a learning culture, share knowledge, and achieve effectiveness in the process of renewing school culture.

**Economic, Cultural and Social Factors of the Area Surrounding the Academy’s Working Area:**

**For Economic Factors:**

The economic conditions of the surrounding area affect the financial resources for building and maintaining a learning culture at the Academy. If the surrounding area has a developed economy, it will create conditions for the Academy to have enough resources to invest in building facilities and a suitable learning environment. At the same time, an area with a dynamic economy also helps the Academy easily access, learn from experiences and create connections with businesses and economic organizations.

**For Cultural Factors:**

The area surrounding the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics has a rich and diverse cultural environment, which will create motivation and valuable learning resources for building a learning culture at the Academy. The good traditional cultural values of the area can be inherited and promoted to build a unique culture for the Academy. On the contrary, if the area has a limited and closed cultural environment, it will be difficult to form a culture of learning and innovation at the Academy.

**Regarding Social Factors:**

The social situation in the area is developed, has a high standard of living and good awareness of education, which will create a favorable environment for the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics to attract resources and build a culture of learning. If there are many complex social issues in the area, it will reduce the concentration and readiness for learning of the Academy’s cadres and trainees. In addition, the level of interest and investment in education of the local community also affects the mobilization of resources for the Academy.

In short, the economic, cultural and social factors of the surrounding area are the external environment that directly affects the process of building a school culture according to the concept of learning organizations at the Academy. Depending on the specific conditions of the area, these factors can become favorable or unfavorable to this process. Therefore, during the construction process, the Academy needs to have an appropriate assessment and understanding of the external environment to have timely and appropriate solutions and adjustments.

**Current Status of Factors Affecting the Construction of School Culture According to the Concept of Learning Organization at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics**

The results of the assessment of the level of influence of the factors are shown in the table below:

**Table 1: Assessment of cadres, civil servants, public employees, workers and trainees on the level of influence of factors affecting the management of school culture construction activities according to the concept of learning organization of the Academy**

Order	Factors affecting	Cadres, civil servants, public employees, workers	Trainees
1	Globalization and cultural diversity, the fourth industrial revolution	3.92	4.32
2	The Party and State’s guidelines, policies, and strategies	4.07	4.45
3	Economic, cultural, and social factors in the area surrounding the Academy’s working area	3.98	4.2
4	Coordination of social forces (Interest and coordination between the Academy and central departments, ministries, branches, and	3.98	4.42

Order	Factors affecting	Cadres, civil servants, public employees, workers	Trainees
	organizations; local Party committees and authorities in training and fostering activities)		
5	Leadership and governance factors in the Academy	4.35	4.38
6	Human resource factors in the school (including cadres, civil servants, public employees, etc., and socio-political organizations, etc.)	4.16	4.48
7	Trainees: Trainees studying in the Academy are the largest force, the force that decides to build the culture in the Academy.	3.88	4.35
8	Tangible cultural factors include facilities and technical infrastructure in the school	4.12	4.38
9	Traditional cultural factors of the Academy	4.26	4.44

The above survey results show that the general trend of both cadres' and trainees' assessments shows that both objective and subjective factors play a relatively important role in influencing the management of school culture-building activities according to the learning organization concept of the Academy, reflected in the relatively high average assessment score. The average assessment score of trainees on the level of influence tends to be higher than the average assessment score of cadres, civil servants, public employees, and workers. For cadres, the assessment score of the importance of objective factors (political and social institutions; globalization and cultural diversity; economic, cultural, and social factors in the area surrounding the Academy's working area, new trends in technology) is assessed as important with a low score. The score assessing the importance of objective factors is lower than the influence of subjective factors, especially the factor "the Academy's leadership, first of all, the Academy's Board of Directors, has a decisive role in managing the Academy's culture building activities" which is assessed by the cadres in terms of influence with the highest average score (4.35/5 points). In addition to the factors related to the role of the Academy's leadership and Board of Directors, there are several subjective factors assessed by both the cadres and trainees in terms of influence on the management of school culture-building activities according to the Academy's learning organization concept such as the team of cadres, civil servants, public employees, and workers in the Academy; the conditions of material and technical facilities, information technology infrastructure in the Academy; the long-standing cultural tradition of the Academy. The above analysis results show that to accelerate the process of building a school culture according to the Academy's concept of a learning organization, solutions need to focus on subjective factors from the Academy itself, including the intention and determination to change from the Academy's leadership, the consensus of the cadres, investment in renovating facilities, and at the same time relying on the strength of the Academy's long-standing cultural traditions while daring to eliminate outdated elements and patterns and replace them with modern values.

The analysis data shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the assessment of the level of influence of factors affecting the management of school culture-building activities according to the Academy's concept of a learning organization (including 13 factors mentioned in the table above) when analyzing the correlation according to the different characteristics of gender, age group, job position, academic title/degree. The main difference is reflected in the assessment of different groups in terms of seniority and age group.

**Table 2: Average assessment scores of cadres, civil servants, public employees, and workers on the level of influence of factors affecting the management of school culture-building activities according to the concept of learning organization of the Academy analyzed by working time and age group**

Order	Assessment of the level of influence	Working time			Group of years old		
		Under 10 years	From 10 to 15 years	Over 15 years	Under 41 years old	From 41 to 50 years old	Over 41 years old
1	Globalization and cultural diversity, the fourth industrial revolution	4.11	3.90	3.89	3.98	3.96	3.68
2	The Party and State's guidelines, policies, and strategies	4.35*	4.17*	3.97*	4.21*	4.10*	3.73*
3	Economic, cultural, and social factors in the area surrounding the Academy's working area	4.05	3.90	3.86	3.98*	3.96*	3.61*
4	Coordination of social forces (Interest and coordination between the Academy and central departments, ministries, branches, and organizations; local Party committees and authorities in training and fostering activities)	4.36*	4.20*	3.90*	4.22*	4.12*	3.75*

Order	Assessment of the level of influence	Working time			Group of years old		
		Under 10 years	From 10 to 15 years	Over 15 years	Under 41 years old	From 41 to 50 years old	Over 41 years old
5	Leadership and governance factors in the Academy	4.47	4.44	4.27	4.44*	4.40*	3.98*
6	Human resource factors in the school (including cadres, civil servants, public employees, etc., and socio-political organizations, etc.)	4.39*	4.22*	4.06*	4.32*	4.18*	3.75*
7	Trainees: Trainees studying in the Academy are the largest force, the force that decides to build the culture in the Academy.	4.26*	3.91*	3.70*	4.09*	3.85*	3.52*
8	Tangible cultural factors include facilities and technical infrastructure in the school	4.39*	4.29*	3.90*	4.21*	4.22*	3.64*
9	Traditional cultural factors of the Academy	4.52*	4.39*	4.09*	4.33*	4.33*	3.93*

\* *P value* ≤ 0,05

The table shows quite clearly the general trend that young people and those with less working experience tend to evaluate the impact of all 13 factors on the management of school culture-building activities according to the concept of learning organization with a higher average score, on the contrary, the oldest age group and those with the longest working experience are also the group that evaluates these influencing factors lower. Notably, the factor that is evaluated with the highest average score in terms of its ability to impact the management of school culture-building activities according to the concept of learning organization is the factor that has no difference in the average score of the level of impact analyzed according to working experience. Young cadres or cadres with more years of experience have similar assessments of the level of influence of this factor and this is a key factor affecting the management of school culture-building activities: The Academy’s leaders, first of all, the Academy’s Board of Directors, play a decisive role in the management of the Academy’s culture building activities.

Analyzing the differences in gender and age groups of trainees in their assessments of the level of influence of factors affecting the management of school culture-building activities according to the concept of a learning organization that the Academy is building, the analysis results show that there is no statistically significant difference with most assessments. In addition, analysis by training system characteristics and academic titles/degrees shows that there are differences in some assessments of the level of influence of factors affecting the management of school culture-building activities according to the concept of a learning organization of the Academy as follows:

**Table 3: Average score of trainees’ assessment of the level of influence of factors affecting the management of school culture-building activities according to the concept of learning organization of the Academy analyzed by training system and academic title/degree of trainees**

Order	Content	High-training system of political theory		Degree/university teacher’s rank		
		Centralized	Non-centralized	Bachelor	Master	Dr/ Associate Professor/ Professor
1	Globalization and cultural diversity, the fourth industrial revolution	4.16*	4.36*	4.11*	4.27*	4.24*
2	Leadership and governance factors in the Academy	4.34*	4.58*	4.28*	4.47*	4.51*
3	Tangible cultural factors including facilities and technical infrastructure in the school	4.23*	4.48*	4.24	4.29	4.36
4	Factors of the Academy’s long-standing cultural traditions	4.41*	4.57*	4.39	4.46	4.49

\* *P value* ≤ 0,05

Trainees of the non-concentrated training system evaluated the level of influence of 4 factors out of 13 factors with a higher average score of influence than trainees of the non-concentrated training system. These are also 4 factors that

are assessed to have an important impact on the management of school culture-building activities according to the concept of learning organization of the Academy according to the general analysis results of the whole sample, in which the factor of Academy leadership, first of all the Board of Directors has a decisive role in the management of school culture building activities, which trainees of the non-concentrated system assess to have the highest level of influence (4.58/5 points), followed by the factor belonging to the long-standing cultural tradition of the Academy (4.57/5 points). Regarding the difference in the assessment of groups of trainees with different academic titles and degrees, the results show that the general trend is that the higher the level of the group, the higher the importance of the 4 factors in the table above that affect the management of school culture building activities according to the concept of a learning organization of the Academy, in which the clearest difference is shown in the assessment of the importance of the influence of new trends in technology and society and the role of the Academy's leadership, specifically the role of the Board of Directors of Academy.

## CONCLUSION

If school culture is approached according to theories of learning organizations, it will help the organization promote strong cultural values such as cooperation, individual autonomy, and hierarchy according to systematic thinking and shape the decisions and behaviors of individuals in the organization. The process of building a school culture according to the learning organization approach at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, will be affected by internal and external factors. To effectively implement the goals of building a school culture according to the learning organization approach, the problem for the academy's leadership is to identify positive factors to promote, and at the same time, predict negative factors to proactively overcome and respond promptly.

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