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## The Actual Status of Pupils' Support Policies in Vietnamese Ethnic Semi-Boarding Schools

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### Abstract

*One of the subjects that the Vietnamese government focuses and pays attention to developing is ethnic minority pupils, as stated in the Vietnamese Education Law 2019. In order to prioritize funding for education and training in ethnic minority communities, particularly for pupils attending ethnic semi-boarding schools, the government has mandated the creation and implementation of a number of systems and regulations. This program seeks to advance educational equality while addressing the educational requirements of children from ethnic minorities. In addition to the advantages and beneficial effects the policy has had in the past, the process of putting it into practice has shown challenges and restrictions that must be addressed and modified to meet new demands. In order to provide a scientific foundation for suggesting solutions and recommendations to the National Assembly, the Government, and relevant Ministries and sectors to amend, supplement, and promulgate policies appropriate for the current context of educational innovation, this article uses a combination of survey investigation through questionnaires, in-depth interviews with managers, teachers, parents, and pupils of ethnic semi-boarding schools, and retrospective research of documents.*

**Keywords:** Policy, Ethnic Minority Pupils, Ethnic Semi-Boarding Schools.

### Introduction

The Education Law of 1998, 2005, and 2019 all affirmed: Ethnic semi-boarding schools are specialized schools established by the state for ethnic minority pupils and pupils from families residing permanently in areas with extremely difficult socio-economic conditions to contribute to implementing equality in access to education and the goal of sustainable development in education in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

After many years of ethnic semi-boarding schools being recorded in the law, in 2010, the Ministry of Education and Training promulgated Circular 24/2010/TT-BGDĐT, dated 02 August 2010, on the regulations on the organization and operation of ethnic semi-boarding schools. Circular 24 continued to be amended and supplemented, and newly promulgated Circular 05/VBHN-BGDĐT, dated 24 December 2015, and most recently Circular 03/2023/TT-BGDĐT on the Regulations on Organization and Operation of Ethnic Minority Semi-Boarding Schools. Accordingly, ethnic minority semi-boarding schools will implement educational activities under the regulations of the general school charter and specific educational activities.

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By the end of the school year 2023-2024, Vietnam had 1,213 ethnic semi-boarding schools in 29 provinces and cities, concentrated in the northern midland and mountainous areas. Ethnic semi-boarding schools are often built in the central areas of communes and districts, which are relatively convenient for transportation and meeting and seeing the pupils. The general structure of the ethnic semi-boarding school type includes 3 areas: study area, administrative area, and semi-boarding area with living rooms, kitchen, toilet, vegetable garden, playground, exercise area... ensuring that pupils can study and stay half a day at the school.

The scale of ethnic semi-boarding schools is increasingly expanding, and the number of pupils is increasing day by day. The quality of education in ethnic semi-boarding schools is also being gradually improved through each school year, which has been changing the quality of education in ethnic minority areas, contributing to gradually improving the intellectual level of the people and developing human resources.

The organization of teaching and learning at ethnic semi-boarding schools must always carry out two tasks at the same time: teaching and learning like general schools at the same level in accordance with the regulations and implementing specific activities.

When studying here, the pupils can implement educational activities following the regulations of the general school charter and specific educational activities to attract and create the right motivation to study. These activities have contributed to preserving and promoting the cultural identity of ethnic minorities, creating a useful playground for pupils, motivating pupils to perform well in diligent work, and basically overcoming the situation of ethnic minority pupils dropping out of school. Specific educational activities for pupils in ethnic semi-boarding schools, such as:

- (i) Being propagated, educated about the ethnic policies and guidelines of the Party and State.
- (ii) Being educated on life skills, gender and gender equality, environmental protection, labor, and hygiene in schools, classrooms, and places to eat and sleep... to attract pupils to participate in useful activities, gradually changing backward customs, ways of thinking, and lifestyles.
- (iii) Being strengthened with Vietnamese, which is the common language for learning and communicating, along with the mother tongue.
- (iv) Participating in organizing the activities of culture, literature and arts, physical exercises and sports, sightseeing, festivals, ethnic New Year, and cultural exchanges to contribute to preserving and promoting the cultural identity of ethnic groups.
- (v) Being organized to cook collectively to ensure hygiene and food safety and health care;
- (vi) Being arranged to eat, stay, and live in the dormitory and enjoying the regimes and policies following the regulations of the State.

To implement the assigned tasks, the ethnic semi-boarding school is supported and invested in material facilities and equipment, including housing, beds, kitchens, dining rooms, bathrooms, sanitary works, clean water works, and enclosed equipment for semi-boarding pupils built according to the current school design standards. Every year, the school is entitled to purchase, supplement, and repair physical exercise and sports tools, musical instruments, and TV sets, serving cultural and physical exercise and sports activities for semi-boarding pupils. A medicine cabinet is set up for common use of the semi-boarding area, with common medicines in sufficient quantity to meet the requirements of disease prevention and handling of sudden emergencies.

In addition to regular learning hours in the classrooms, semi-boarding pupils also organize self-study sessions with the enthusiastic support of teachers, becoming a routine and habit for each pupil. This is also the strength and difference of ethnic semi-boarding schools. Not only enjoying the conditions to ensure the learning environment, pupils of ethnic semi-boarding schools are also paid attention to and directly supported by the Party, State, Ministries, Departments, and society in terms of material (rice, clean water, books, money, etc.), which helps pupils feel secure going to school and have more motivation to practice morality and talent in schools.

In general, policies for pupils of ethnic semi-boarding schools are mainly based on Decree No. 116/2016/ND-CP dated 18 July 2016 of the Government regulating the policies to support pupils and general schools in communes and hamlets with special difficulties. On average, every year, about half a million pupils at general schools are entitled to this policy, including policy to support meal payment, rice, and housing costs for pupils without arranging semi-boarding in the school from school. Along with Decree 116, policies for pupils in ethnic minority areas have brought about clear results, helping to maintain the number of pupils, increase the rate of pupils attending school, improve the quality of teaching and learning, and help ethnic minority pupils have the opportunity to be cared for, nurtured, and educated in a better environment.

In addition to policies specifically for semi-boarding pupils, pupils at ethnic semi-boarding schools are also entitled to general policies like other pupils in ethnic minority areas, such as Policy of tuition exemption and reduction, support for learning costs were implemented according to Decree 81/2021/ND-CP dated 27 August 2021 of the Government; Policy for pupils with disabilities was implemented according to joint Circular No. 41/2013/TTLT-BGDDT-BLDTB&XH-BTC dated 31 December 2013 of the Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, Ministry of Finance; Policy of health insurance support towards Circular No. 25/2016/TT-BLDTBXH dated 26 July 2016 of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; Policy of enrolment through consideration mode for ethnic minority pupils was according to Decree No. 141/2020/ND-CP dated 18 December 2020 of the Government...

Besides policies from the central government (government, Ministry of Education and Training, etc.), localities in ethnic minority areas also have their own policies for education in general and support for pupils in ethnic semi-boarding schools in particular, such as using the budget to implement the semi-boarding model, supporting scholarships for semi-boarding pupils, contributing materials to build semi-boarding houses, organizing cooking and daily activities... The diversity of policies for pupils and schools has partly supported life, reduced economic difficulties for pupils' families, and created conditions for them to feel secure in eating and living, actively studying, participating in activities, and improving educational results.

However, in addition to the significant benefits and positive impacts that policies at all levels have brought over the past time, during the process of implementation organization, many difficulties and limitations have been revealed that need to be overcome and innovated to meet new requirements. Cummins et al. (2011) stated that, in fact, most policies do not achieve 100% success, but they can be successful in some areas, and some small changes will appear in this area, but the success is not in other areas. Policy evaluation will warn policymakers/policy subjects where and which part of the policy needs to be changed to achieve the highest output efficiency.

In order to have a basis for proposing solutions to improve the efficiency of implementing policies to support pupils in ethnic semi-boarding schools, this study focuses on clarifying the

advantages, disadvantages, and achieved results in the implementation of policies being implemented in 03 provinces with many ethnic semi-boarding schools in Vietnam, including Lao Cai, Ha Giang, and Gia Lai.

## Research Materials and Methods

### Participants

The study was conducted with 470 people from many different sectors and localities. Including 23 managers at the level of the Office of Education and Training and managers at the school level; 221 headteachers, cadre in charge/semi-boarding staff; 95 pupils being eligible for the policies, focusing on Mong, Dao, Nung, Tay, and Mnong ethnic groups; and 131 people from local governments and parents of pupils entitled to the policies. Specifically as follows:

Research location			Subjects (Unit: Number of People)			
Province	Districts	Ethnic semi-boarding schools	Manager	Teacher, Staff	Pupils	Community
Lao Cai	<i>Bac Ha</i>	Lung Cai Primary and Lower-Secondary school	1	19	10	9
		Ta Van Chu Primary and Lower-Secondary school	2	16	11	21
		Thai Giang Pho primary school	3	18	10	9
	<i>Simacai</i>	Number 1 Primary school, Lung Than commune	1	20	0	14
		Number 2 Primary school, Lung Than commune	2	15	0	9
		Lower-Secondary school, Lung Than commune	2	17	11	10
Ha Giang	<i>Xin Man</i>	Ta Nhiu Primary and Lower-Secondary school	3	17	10	10
		Ban Ngo Lower-Secondary school	1	17	12	10
		Nan Ma Lower-Secondary school	1	18	10	11
Gia Lai	<i>Kbang</i>	Đak Rong Primary and Lower-Secondary school	3	17	10	10
		Le Van Tam Primary school	2	29	0	9
		Krong Lower-Secondary school	2	18	11	9
Total		<b>470</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>131</b>

Table 1: Research Location and Subjects

The diversity of the survey elements and locations aims to provide objective and multi-dimensional information on the implementation of pupils' support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools.

### **Measurement**

The study used a questionnaire as a measurement tool to assess the respondents' viewpoints and experience on the implementation of pupil support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools. The questionnaire was designed on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The survey participants were given specific instructions on how to express their level of judgment on items related to policy implementation. This scale allowed the participants to state their viewpoints on various aspects of policy organization and implementation, facilitating more accurate quantitative assessment. The questionnaire included items related to various important aspects, such as the policy implementation process in general as well as the implementation of pupils' support policies in studying and the implementation of semi-boarding activity support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools.

The questionnaire was designed to collect demographic data, including the geography of the participants, gender, years of working, education level, and working environment. The inclusion of these demographic characteristics is very important to check the differences in attitudes and experiences among different groups of managers, teachers, and communities in Vietnam. The questionnaire serves as a good tool for collecting systematic and organized data regarding the viewpoints of the survey participants on the implementation of pupils' support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools. The implementation of the Likert scale allows the measurement of responses and allows a more thorough and in-depth checking of the respondents' understanding of the policy implementation.

The questionnaire used in this study has undergone a thorough pilot testing process to ensure its clarity, appropriateness, and reliability. SPSS was chosen for data analysis due to its robust ability, and descriptive statistics data was used to grasp key trends in the participants' perceptions, ensuring a transparent and systematic approach to interpreting the data. The expert's assessment further confirmed the validity of the content.

In addition, to obtain additional information for assessing the current status of implementing support policies for pupils in ethnic semi-boarding schools, the research team used a combination of school year summary reports from the Ministry of Education and Training, school year summary reports from the Departments of Education and Training of Lao Cai, Ha Giang, and Gia Lai, and school year summary reports from surveyed schools.

### **Data Analysis**

The research data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to investigate the viewpoints of managers, teachers, staff, pupils, local governments, and pupils' parents on the implementation of pupils' support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools. The analysis focused on collecting descriptive data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses to the questionnaire according to the Likert scale. Initially, descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the distribution of responses among survey items. Percentages were calculated to demonstrate the distribution of participants selecting each response option (such as completely suitable, suitable, relatively suitable, partially suitable, or

completely unsuitable) for statements related to policy implementation. This method allows the quantitative assessment of the level to which survey participants support specific viewpoints or beliefs related to policy implementation. Then, an average score was calculated to assess the average level of agreement or disagreement among participants for each item in the survey. Higher agreement among survey participants on the usefulness or importance of specific elements in policy implementation was reflected in higher average scores. In contrast, lower average scores indicated greater differences in responses, indicating areas where educators and local communities have different viewpoints.

SPSS analysis provided valuable understanding about the viewpoints and attitudes of managers, teachers, staff, pupils, local governments, and pupils' parents towards policy implementation. The study used descriptive statistics to find out models in the responses, showing which processes and contents of policy implementation were well received, well implemented, or problematic. These findings are very essential for policy improvement, as they highlight whether the policy implementation process and content of policies in Vietnam are actually efficient. The use of SPSS to analyze the data allowed thorough investigation of the survey responses, ensuring that conclusions were drawn from reliable statistical techniques. These findings not only enhance understanding in the field of educational research but also provide practical implications for improving the quality and efficiency in the implementation of policies in general and policies to support pupils in ethnic semi-boarding schools in particular.

## **Results**

Ha Giang, Lao Cai, and Gia Lai are all ethnic minority localities, with many ethnic semi-boarding schools and a large number of pupils. Although they learn at the same ethnic semi-boarding school, not all pupils are entitled to the policy, but usually the percentage fluctuates from over 40% to over 80% of pupils getting the regime at each school. The reason for this is that in the regulations of Decree 116/2016/ND-CP, schools with a lower percentage of pupils enjoying the policy regime are located in convenient areas, and pupils rarely meet the criteria for distance from home to school.

For the content of the support policies for pupils that localities/schools are implementing, the answer is highly consistent that 100% of localities/schools are implementing all pupils' support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools in accordance with the regulations of the State. In addition, some schools implement other policies from the province, district, and school to encourage, prioritize, and further encourage pupils through contributions and sponsorships from businesses, organizations, and individuals in terms of finance, scholarships, tools, books, means of transport, and living appliances; contribution of labor and finance to support schools in repairing semi-boarding areas, playgrounds, and exercise grounds for pupils.

For the process of implementing pupils' support policies in ethnic semi-boarding Schools, managers, teachers, and semi-boarding staff all agreed on the implementation to ensure a common process including 6 steps: (1) Promulgating documents and plans to implement policies; (2) Disseminating and propagating policies; (3) Assigning and coordinating in implementing policies; (4) Mobilizing and arranging resources to implement policies; (5) Inspecting and supervising policy implementation; (6) Evaluating results of policy implementation. The implementation according to the above 6 steps ensures that policies are implemented in accordance with the process from the time the documents are promulgated until there are instructions for deployment and organization of implementation at the facilities. However, the implementation level of policies according to each step in this process in schools

and localities also has differences, although the differences are not big.

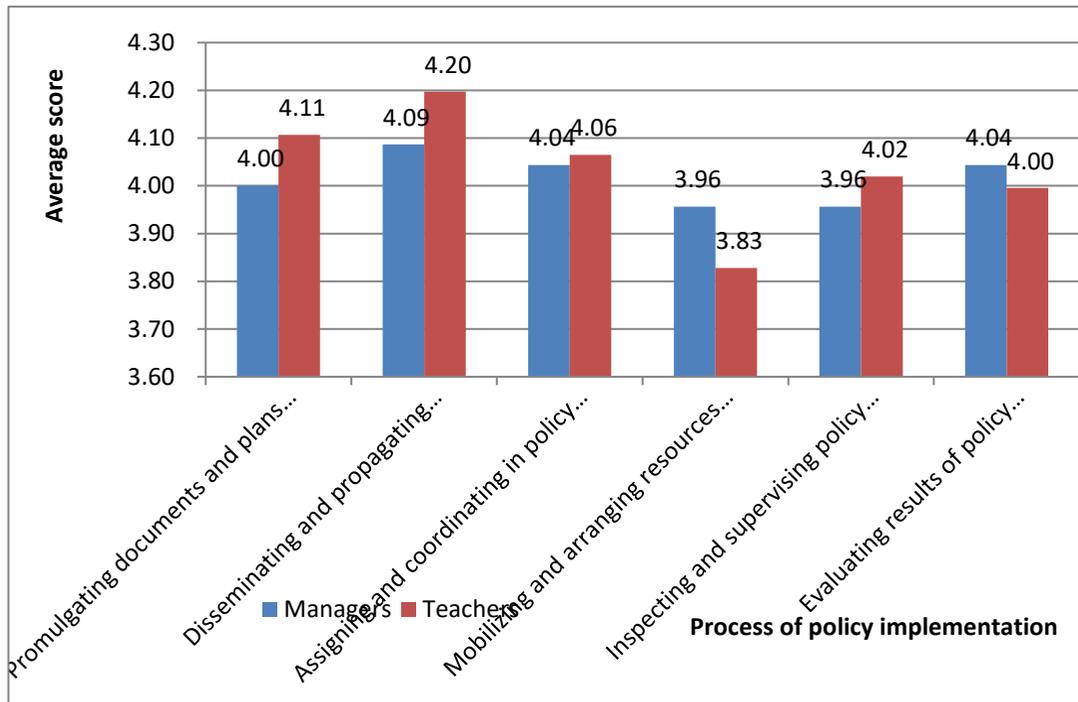


Figure 1. Deployment Level According to the Process of Policy Implementation

The promulgation of documents and plans to implement policies has the majority of respondents in localities with the judgment of “*Satisfied - Timely - Appropriate*” with the average score of managers being 4.0 and teachers and semi-boarding staff being 4.11. The level of promulgating documents (People’s Committee, People’s Council, Departments) has promulgated documents timely and with full content, in attachment to the policy implementation plan, in which the content has been clarified on: organization and operation plan; resource plan (material facilities, expenditure, apparatus organization, and human resources); implementation time plan; and plan on inspecting and urging implementation. The timely and specific promulgation of documents and policy implementation plans has contributed significantly to the policy being deployed and organized implementation at lower levels.

The dissemination and propaganda of policies were often organized after the documents and instructions for implementation organization were available. Then, localities/schools timely deployed to relevant subjects in flexible, direct, and indirect forms through websites, social networks such as Facebook and Zalo, and bulletin boards. This content, through surveys in localities, was appreciated highly, timely, and efficiently by most respondents; therefore, the average score for this step was relatively high, 4.09 and 4.20, respectively, for managers and teachers. In which Lao Cai province was the locality that best implemented the dissemination and propaganda of policies in many diverse forms (online, direct) through many information channels, in many different ethnic languages, reaching many hamlets.

The assignment and coordination in policy implementation were also mainly assessed at the level of “*Satisfied - Timely - Appropriate*” with the average assessment of managers, teachers,

and semi-boarding staff in all 3 provinces at the levels of 4.04 and 4.06, with almost no difference in the judgment of these 2 groups of subjects.

The mobilization and arrangement of resources to implement policies were mainly assessed by localities at the levels of “*relatively satisfied, relatively timely, and relatively appropriate*” and “*satisfied, timely, and appropriate.*” The mobilized resources included expenditure, material facilities, equipment, and human resources. These resources played a crucial role in the effective execution of educational policies, ensuring that schools were adequately equipped to meet the needs of students. Overall, the assessments indicate a positive outlook on the resource management and policy implementation across the provinces. ... from approved/granted sources as well as voluntary contributions, additional mobilization from individuals/organizations inside and outside the schools, pupils’ parents, communities/local governments, organizations/enterprises... This content through the survey showed that the level of mobilization and arrangement of resources in Lao Cai was relatively good, followed by Gia Lai and Ha Giang. The average scores through judgment of managers and teachers and semi-boarding staff were 3.96 and 3.83. Although these average scores were still within the range of satisfaction, appropriateness, and timeline, they were still the lowest average scores in the steps of the process of policy implementation in localities.

The inspection, supervision, and evaluation of policy implementation results were assessed by localities/schools at the level of “*Satisfied—Timely—Appropriate*” with an average score of 3.96 to 4.04. In this context, localities/schools all judged that these were two very important steps in the policy implementation process to grasp the implementation situation, determine the level of achievement of goals/targets compared to the implementation plan, and timely detect difficulties and obstacles in the process of deployment and implementation organization, where, which part of the policy needs to change to achieve the set goals.

In the process of implementing the policy, the guarantee of compliance with the given principles is a very important requirement. The results of the survey on managers, teachers, and semi-boarding staff are as follows:

Principles of policy implementation	Average score	
	Managers	Teachers, semi-boarding staff
(1) Ensure consistency with policy objectives	3.48	3.57
(2) Ensure systematicity, closely related to other units to create a unified cycle	3.52	3.50
(3) Ensure scientific, reasonable and legal manners, follow the correct process, quick procedures, have flexibility/adjustment when necessary	3.91	3.82
(4) Ensure the benefits of policy subjects, correct subjects; correct regime; correct payment time	3.83	3.83

Table 2. Level of Ensuring the Principles of Policy Implementation

The general judgment of implementing pupils’ support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools by the surveyed subjects is that they all ensure the set principles. The majority of managers had higher judgment than teachers and semi-boarding staff; however, the difference was not significant, with an average score of 3.48 to 3.91. Principles (3) and (4) were mostly assessed at

the level of margin and satisfaction for both managers and teachers, semi-boarding staff. Principles (1) and (2) were assessed at the level of “*Guarantee, somewhat satisfied*” and “*Guarantee, relatively satisfied*” because there were still places and times when the policy implementation was “without flexibility, adjustment when necessary,” and “payment was not on time.”

For the content of implementing pupils’ learning support policies at ethnic semi-boarding schools, it was surveyed by the research team at 3 contents: (1) Ethnic minority pupils with very small groups who study at ethnic semi-boarding schools are entitled to a learning support level of 60% of the basic salary/pupil/month for 12 months/school year; (2) pupils are supported in learning with 150,000 VND/pupil/month for 9 months/school year; and (3) learning support money is paid twice a year at the beginning of semesters of the school year. These are direct learning support policies for pupils at ethnic semi-boarding schools. The survey results in 3 provinces are as follows:

Implementation results	Average score		
	Ha Giang	Lao Cai	Gia Lai
(1) Ethnic minority pupils with very small ethnic groups who study at ethnic semi-boarding schools are entitled to a learning support level of 60% of the basic salary/pupil/month for 12 months/school year	4.20	4.27	4.43
(2) Pupils are supported in learning with 150,000 VND/pupil/month for 9 months/school year	3.80	3.91	3.71
(3) Learning support money is paid twice a year at the beginning of semesters of the school year	2.60	2.91	3.00

Table 3: Implementation Results of Pupils’ Learning Support Policies

The policy of supporting 60% of the basic salary/pupil/month for pupils of very small ethnic groups was assessed at the level of "very good implementation" with an average score of 4.20 in Ha Giang, 4.27 in Lao Cai, and 4.43 in Gia Lai. Similarly, the policy of supporting pupils with 150,000 VND/month in studying was also assessed at the level of "good implementation." This shows that the learning support policies for pupils are well and fully implemented by localities. For the implementation result of “Learning support money is paid twice a year at the beginning of semesters of the school year”, it was assessed by localities at the level of being relatively good with an average score of 2.60 in Ha Giang, 2.91 in Lao Cai, and 3.00 in Gia Lai due to dependence on expenditure sources, so there were times when payment was delayed according to the regulations; the expenditure was not received at the beginning of each semester but was often received near the end/end of the semester, leading to a status of lacking books and learning tools at the beginning of the school year.

The survey content on the implementation of the semi-boarding support policy for pupils at ethnic semi-boarding schools is as follows:

Implementation results	Average score		
	Ha Giang	Lao Cai	Gia Lai
(1) Support 40% of meal charge/pupil/month	4.00	4.00	3.86
(2) Support 15 kg of rice/pupil/month	4.20	4.18	4.14
(3) Support 10% of accommodation for pupils who have to arrange their own accommodation/pupil/month	3.60	3.90	3.71
(4) Ensure material facilities for semi-boarding	4.00	4.09	4.00
(5) Support the school to purchase, supplement, and repair items for semi-boarding (100,000VND/pupil/school year)	3.60	3.72	3.71
(6) Support the school to set up a jointly used medicine cabinet with 50,000VND/pupil/school year	4.20	4.09	4.57
(7) Support expenditure for cooking equal to 135%/month/30 pupils	3.60	3.72	3.86

Table 4: Implementation Results of Semi-Boarding Support Policies for Pupils

According to the survey results, all semi-boarding support policies for pupils at ethnic semi-boarding schools have been implemented and focused on evaluating from the level of “*Good - Effective*” to “*Very Good - Very Effective*” (the average score of all three provinces was from 3.60 to 4.57). In which, the policy that was evaluated as implementing the best and most efficiently was the policy of *supporting the schools to set up a jointly used medicine cabinet with 50,000 VND/pupil/school year* (with an average score of all three provinces of 4.28) and the policy of *supporting 15 kg of rice/pupil/month* (average score of all three provinces of 4.17). Many managers, teachers, and semi-boarding staff had the same judgment that the amount of rice supported was guaranteed in terms of quantity and quality; even some schools in Lao Cai and Ha Giang have reported that there was a surplus of rice because the consumption of primary school pupils was less than that of secondary school ones. The policy regime that was evaluated to be the least effective was *the regime of supporting schools to purchase, supplement, and repair items for semi-boarding* (the average score of all three provinces was 3.67) and *supporting expenditure for cooking equal to 135%/month/30 pupils* (the average score of all these provinces was 3.72). The managers, teachers, and semi-boarding staff said that semi-boarding activity was one of the important activities of the school, and the expenditure was fully received, ensuring that they are used according to the correct procedures and for the right subjects. The support levels are mostly calculated based on the basic salary, creating conditions for the schools using funds to closely follow the market price.

## Discussion

Policies for pupils of ethnic semi-boarding schools have focused on solving problems related to learning costs, support for activities of semi-boarding schools... These policies have attracted and created opportunities for children to go to school, increased the rate of children going to school, created favorable conditions to help them feel secure to study, contributed to promoting educational activities, and gradually developed the economy, culture, and society in ethnic minority areas. This result was achieved first of all due to the good awareness of managers, teachers, staff, local governments, and pupils' parents about support policies for pupils of ethnic semi-boarding schools. This shows that the management and direction of the implementation of policies have been propagandized, disseminated publicly, timely, and fully to relevant levels and

subjects. 12/12 schools surveyed by the research team had guaranteed accommodation for pupils; there was support for purchasing, supplementing, and repairing equipment, tools, and jointly used medicine cabinets for the semi-boarding areas to serve the cultural, physical exercise, and sports activities, which was relatively guaranteed. All policies and regimes for pupils were fully and timely paid, such as meal charges, rice, books, and learning materials.

However, in the process of organizing and implementing policies, localities and schools in ethnic minority areas encountered many difficulties, which more or less affected the efficiency of the policies. Some of the reasons included the harshness of natural conditions, separation of terrain, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate resources for policy implementation, and policy contents that were not really suitable for each region. Currently, there are some educational support policies implemented in ethnic minority areas, however, there is no consistency and overlap in policy contents, especially in terms of support level, support period, support form, and support subjects (for example: Decree No. 57/2017/ND - CP regulates that the period for pupils to be entitled to is 12 months, while Decree 116/2016/ND-CP stipulates that it is only 9 months/school year; Or there are many ethnic semi-boarding schools with two study levels (primary and secondary) with a large number of semi-boarding pupils such as Lung Cai Ethnic Semi-boarding School, Bac Ha, Lao Cai with 518 pupils; Dak Rong Ethnic Semi-boarding School, Kbang, Gia Lai: 471 pupils but according to regulations, there are only 5 catering staff). Therefore, unity of regulations on policy content is necessary to develop education in ethnic minority areas, ensuring fairness in policy implementation.

For ethnic semi-boarding schools, although the name is "semi-boarding school, the organization and operation of this school is not different from a boarding school; without initial subsidy for semi-boarding materials (uniforms, backpacks, blankets, fitted sheets, pillows, mattresses, mats, mosquito nets), no expenditure for gas, electricity to cook rice, bowls, chopsticks for pupils, and kitchen utensils to organize semi-boarding activities, so many schools in remote areas face various difficulties in organizing educational activities and semi-boarding activities for pupils.

The level of expenditure support for semi-boarding towards the minimum fixed expenditure norm of 135% of the basic salary/01 month/30 pupils is considered by many managers, teachers, and semi-boarding staff to be low. Some schools have a number of pupils exceeding 05 times the norm, but the support level received is only 05 times the norm, making the salary of semi-boarding service staff very low, not enough to attract them to the job. Besides, there is currently no regulation on support for labor support equipment such as cooking clothes, aprons, gloves, boots, etc., so the cooking service staff must be self-sufficient. In addition, the material facilities serving semi-boarding activities in general are equipped with sufficient quantity; however, over time, some items are gradually deteriorating and damaged. The schools must mobilize socialized resources to strengthen repair and maintenance, ensuring semi-boarding services.

The above shortcomings and limitations make the implementation of the policies for pupils of ethnic semi-boarding schools not really effective, and its efficiency is not high and uniform among localities. Some of the main reasons are as follows:

- Each locality has its own characteristics, so in the implementation process, it is impossible to avoid difficulties, obstacles, and shortcomings that the legal documents from the State cannot cover all arising from practice.
- Ethnic semi-boarding schools are often located in difficult and extremely difficult communes; the traffic system and geography are not convenient; the lives of people have many difficulties,

and the rate of poor households is high; schools and classrooms are not yet guaranteed; requirements for care, nurturing, and education; and accommodation for pupils in schools with ethnic semi-boarding pupils are still lacking.

- The current learning support policies are being focused on ethnic minority pupils, while the number of ethnic minority pupils only accounts for a small percentage of the total number of pupils in each school. In addition, the learning support money is paid to pupils' parents, so there are some cases where parents misuse it for other purposes than buying books and learning materials for their children.

- Market prices in the areas of ethnic semi-boarding schools are often much higher than in favorable areas, which also leads to difficulties for schools in organizing activities, especially preparing meals for pupils.

## **Conclusion**

Researching and assessing the application of support programs for pupils in ethnic semi-boarding schools is thought to be a suitable use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as primary and secondary data sources. The survey revealed that, despite the aforementioned benefits, favors, drawbacks, challenges, and inadequacies in the communities, the support programs for pupils in ethnic semi-boarding schools had produced results, however not all of them were equal. As a result, synchronous solutions are required to address challenges and shortcomings in specific areas, helping to increase the effectiveness of policies in assisting students in ethnic semi-boarding schools. The findings of the study provide as a crucial practical foundation for ideas on how to make the policies more effective in helping, inspiring, and motivating students in both their academic and personal life.

Although there are many ethnic minority provinces in Vietnam, the study primarily examined and assessed the implementation of support programs for pupils attending ethnic semi-boarding schools in three of those regions. Future research must therefore broaden its focus in order to have a more thorough and all-encompassing perspective on the implementation of pupils' support policies in ethnic semi-boarding schools.

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