

Mr Dang Cong Ngu: Under-35 Leadership Nominations Show ‘Renovating Danang’

As the city issued a mechanism for civil servants aged under 35 to be nominated for leadership positions by their superiors, Mr Dang Cong Ngu (former Director of the Danang Department of Home Affairs) believes it necessary to be open and fair in the proceedings.

The Danang Party Standing Committee recently issued the Project to build and create a source of young cadres for positions managed by the City Party Standing Committee and of key city cadres until 2025 and after (referred to shortly as the Young Cadre Project).

- What changes with the Young Cadre Project compared to previous policy, Sir?

- Danang is the first locality in the entire country to hold exams for leadership positions. First it was the Vice Principal of Phan Chau Trinh High School, then the Vice Principal, Principal, Heads, Deputies, and Vice Director of the Institute for Socioeconomic Research of the city (positions managed by the City Party Branch). The highest position the city has held an exam for was Director of the Department of Construction. I mention it to show that Danang has put to practice many specific solutions to select talented people for management positions. It is a sound policy and shows the determination and innovation in the work of its cadre. The Project has many new points. Five nomination criteria are boldly put forward: regularly graduated from a public university, at least five years of experience, good reputation and exemplary achievements, and being younger than 35. One out of these five criteria relates to capabilities. To evaluate and select cadres, one must first look at abilities and quality, which, of course, cannot be equated with having a degree. In addition, the city should consider people that graduated from private universities. In practice there are many private universities training majors with very skilled students. For example, Duy Tan University in Danang leads in Hospitality and Information Technology education. And many students of private universities competing in Robocon Asia have brought honor to Vietnam.



Mr Dang Cong Ngu, former Director of the Danang Department of Home Affairs

(Photo taken by Nguyen Dong)

- Some people worry that the good intentions in this nominating system will be difficult to achieve, because of the mentality of “descendants first, then money, then relationships, then intelligence”, identified since long ago. What is your opinion?

- Our forebears already did nominations. In feudal times, mandarins with high positions at court would nominate someone with talent, virtue, and potential for the court to appoint. Nominating based on responsibility, impartiality, and objectivity is very good. Do not rule out the importance of personal factors, however, and taking responsibility in particular has always been rather fuzzy. When someone is nominated or proposed in other countries, this will be based on their reputation and their honor. In Vietnam, on the other hand, the attitude of proposing relationships, colleagues, or team members has been current for long. Another attitude is that nominators are afraid of their responsibility, and they will usually select “safe” candidates, not daring to choose people with personality or breakthroughs in their work. Introducing family members into one’s office, truth be told, can be okay if the person in question is really capable. I believe that, if the process is objective, public, and fair, then people will not be so hard on it. Of course it will be harder later, because evaluations will mix the common with the personal. This is why personal feelings should be avoided when appointing cadres, and both team members and the public should be considered to make the right choice.

To me, when the People’s Committee of the city finish the Project, they should add probing the reputation of the nominees in their work, and as for how: the work units in question will be tasked with the specific computations.

- *What is your evaluation of the fact that leadership and management nominations will be limited in age to 35?*

- The requirement of nominating young cadres is not new in Danang, but this is the first time a concrete number is given. Among the five standards that have been set is the fact that the nominee should have five years of experience, and then they also close nominations to those over 35 years. Nominees thus have to fit between these two criteria. As a result, people under 26 will in general not be available for nomination (because one needs five years of experience after graduation). This could lead to missed talent. In other countries there are Ministers of 28. Truly skilled people therefore do not need five years of experience. Although the city has an abundant source of public servants thanks to the policy of attracting talent and the Project to develop a high-quality workforce, there will still be few left if they limit themselves to the ages from 27 to 34. And the fewer people fit into the selected age bracket, the less choice there will be. This is why this limit should be reconsidered.

- Should there be regulations on how many people managers can nominate, to avoid a flood of introductions, and of guaranteeing follow-up and help after nomination? What do you think?

- I believe a rule should be made limiting the number of nominations per manager, such that the nominator themselves can choose and can take responsibility for their introduction. According to me, each City Party member and head of an agency or work unit should only introduce at most two people. And these should be one person from inside and one from outside their work unit, to guarantee objectivity and fairness. If several managers propose the same person, then that person should be considered highly trustworthy.

- *To pave the way for young managers, the Project foresees a policy encouraging older people to retire early. What is your opinion about that part?*

- The Danang Party Standing Committee openly carries out solutions removing the barriers for young cadre. But to me the expression “encouraging older people to retire early” is very imprecise. It should be “encouraging cadres with high positions to retire early”. This is, of course, not easy to implement. Many people can be old but experienced and carry out their work well, and we should not encourage them to retire. Or encouraging a manager who does not want to retire will also not give young people the space to challenge and prove themselves. Instead a mechanism should be instated to evaluate cadres, particularly managers. This evaluation should focus on whether they fulfill their tasks well. If an older manager does not meet their work requirements, they will just have to retire.

(Media Center)

