



A Study On Training, Retraining Vietnamese Civil Servants

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

In each country, training and retraining are considered as a key measure to improve the quality of civil servants and better serve the people. In spite of different content and methods, training and retraining civil servants in different organizations are all aimed at developing competent civil servants. In this study, the impacts of training and retraining on the quality of civil servants are mainly addressed. Based on the theoretical framework, a survey was conducted with 240 commune-level civil servants from 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh Province (Northern region), Quang Binh Province (Central region), and Binh Phuoc province (Southern region). Research results have shown that civil servants find local training policies to update and supplement knowledge and working skills for civil servants have been less effectively implemented. The finding suggests appropriate adjustments to training and retraining policies to improve the quality of civil servants and better serve the public service.

Keywords: Civil servants; Training; Retraining, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

Vietnam's administrative reform process poses requirements of training and retraining programs to fostering civil servants with sufficient qualities, capabilities and qualifications, meeting the requirements of serving the people and the development of country; building a democratic, professional, and modern administration [VG, 2021a]. To achieve this goal, the government continues to adjust training and retraining policies [VG, 2021b] to create the important legal basis for central and local agencies to implement annual training and retraining programs for civil servants.

Local authorities (including 63 provincial authorities (provinces and municipal cities); 705 district-level authorities (districts, towns, provincial cities, cities of municipal cities); 10.599 commune-level authorities (communes, wards, commune – level towns) [GSO, 2023]) has implemented training and retraining policies for civil servants and achieved positive results. It is generally seen that the annual training and training programs for civil servants has contributed to enhancing competent civil servants (with the qualifications, capacity and qualities to meet basic requirements of the national reform). Despite certain limitations, the training and retraining programs have been in the care of state agencies and supported civil servants to meet professional standards, political theory and civil servant ranks, creating a premise for the administrative reform for the period until 2030 [MOHA, 2023] to be further implemented.

The achievements in implementing training and retraining policies for Vietnamese civil servants are of great significance in state management. However, in terms of research, this study is designed to survey, evaluate and verify the results of implementing civil servant training and retraining policies. Therefore, the scope of study is determined with the impacts of training and retraining programs on the quality of Vietnamese civil servants.

2. Literature review

Having been the topic of debates, the terms "training" and "retraining", in the most general meaning, are defined to form, update, and supplement knowledge and skills for civil servants so that they can well perform their assigned tasks. According to Cuong, T.V. et al. (2018), training aims to form knowledge, professional skills and expertise for civil servants. Sharing the same view, Can, N.T. (2020) affirms that training helps civil servants understand their work and competently perform professional skills to fulfill their responsibilities. In addition, Le, D.T. (2023) emphasizes that training is to form and develop new skills for civil servants so that they can accomplish their duties. Vietnamese managers and policy makers also show their same views when affirming that "training is the process of systematically transmitting and receiving knowledge and skills appropriated with each level as regulated" [VG, 2017]. In addition to the common view of training is to build up new knowledge and skills, help civil servants acquire and apply knowledge and skills required by their professions in public service activities, researchers and managers emphasize the specific requirements of training. Accordingly, training must achieve the goal of standardizing the professional qualifications of civil servants; Comply with relevant legal regulations and promote self-study among civil servants. This is not only the responsibility of state management agencies but also the right of civil servants so that they can obtain the knowledge and skills to meet the standards of civil servant ranks and titles as well as the requirements of job positions in accordance with regulations. On that basis, the scale of "Civil servant training" (CT) is developed with related contents, including: Civil servants are trained to standardize professional qualifications according to rank standards and job position requirements (CT1); State agencies comply with the principles of civil servant training management; ensure training policies and rights of civil servants in accordance with the needs of developing human resources of the state agencies and localities (CT2); Civil servants are encouraged to promote their proactive learning; Training policies are publicly and transparently implemented in terms of learning opportunities for all civil servants (CT3).

With reference to updating and supplementing knowledge, this is one of missions of civil servant training affirmed by researchers. According to Phe, H. (2011), "training is to upgrade qualifications, professional capacities or qualities". Tung, L.S. (2022) further emphasizes that training is also meaningful in regards of improving civil servants' serving attitudes and the people's satisfaction with state agencies' performance. When developing civil servant training policies, Vietnamese managers and policy makers also share the same opinion, affirming that "training is the activity of equipping, updating, and improving professional knowledge and working skills for civil servants"; Civil servant training programs are determined to meet civil servant rank standards, professional knowledge and working skills as required by job positions and create civil servants' positive attitudes to serving the people and improve the people's satisfaction with state agencies' performance [VG, 2017]. Findings from researches and laws on civil servant training allow this study to develop the research scale of "Civil servant retraining" (CR) with related contents, including: Civil servants are trained in knowledge and skills according to rank standards and meet civil servant rank standards (CR1); Civil servants receive annual training on specialized knowledge and skills according to job position requirements and meet the job position requirements (CR2); Civil servants' learning rights are guaranteed and they are encouraged to self-improve and update knowledge and skills to well perform their assigned tasks (CR3).

That training and retraining are regularly carried out with specific policies is of important significance; becomes the key measure to improve the quality of civil servants. By training and retraining, civil servants not only develop new knowledge and skills, update and upgrade existing knowledge and skills, but also raise awareness of self-learning and self-improvement to continuously develop their working capacity. The quality of local civil servants is, therefore, maintained, meeting the changes and development of society and the increasing demands of the people - customers. In this sense, the research hypothesis is set out: *Training (H1) and retraining (H2) are the key policy measures, having positive impacts on the quality of civil servants.*

From a theoretical and practical perspective, the quality of civil servants is closely linked to the development of state agencies and organizations. Many studies conducted in Vietnam confirm that the quality of civil servants includes qualities, capacities and serving attitudes of civil servants (knowledge, specialized skills, understanding of law and related issues). related to public service activities) and is shown through their work results, specifically: The quality of civil servants refers to their qualities and working capacity to meet the job requirements of state agencies [Ha, T.T. et al, 2023]; or civil servants who are evaluated for their quality when they demonstrate their qualities, working capacities by the work results as well as the service satisfying businesses and the people [UK, K.Q. et al., 2023]. Therefore, the research scale of "The quality of civil servants" (QCS) can be built with the following

observed variables: Civil servants have qualifications and understanding of relevant professional knowledge and legal knowledge in public service activities and specialized fields (QCS1); Civil servants have knowledge, skills, and expertise that meet rank standards and job position requirements (QCS2); Civil servants have a working spirit and service attitude that satisfying the people and businesses; proactively work to serve the public service (QCS3).

Based on the literature review, a theoretical research framework with a 3-factor model has been developed. The research scale and research model include 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 9 observed variables when the study focus on the influences of training and retraining on the quality of civil servants. The scales in the model are designed into questions in the survey questionnaire and measured with a 5-level Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No opinion; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1. Research theoretical framework

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	Civil servant training	CT					
1	Civil servants are trained to standardize professional qualifications according to rank standards and job position requirements.	CT1					
2	State agencies comply with the principles of civil servant training management; ensure training policies and rights of civil servants in accordance with the needs of developing human resources of the state agencies and localities.	CT2					
3	Civil servants are encouraged to promote their proactive learning; Training policies are publicly and transparently implemented in terms of learning opportunities for all civil servants.	CT3					
II	Civil servant retraining	CR					
4	Civil servants are trained in knowledge and skills according to rank standards and meet civil servant rank standards.	CR1					
5	Civil servants receive annual training on specialized knowledge and skills according to job position requirements and meet the job position requirements.	CR2					
6	Civil servants' learning rights are guaranteed and they are encouraged to self-improve and update knowledge and skills to well perform their assigned tasks.	CR3					
III	The quality of civil servants	QCS					
7	Civil servants have qualifications and understanding of relevant professional knowledge and legal knowledge in public service activities and specialized fields.	QCS1					
8	Civil servants have knowledge, skills, and expertise that meet rank standards and job position requirements.	QCS2					
9	Civil servants have a working spirit and service attitude that satisfying the people and businesses; proactively work to serve the public service.	QCS3					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

Research models

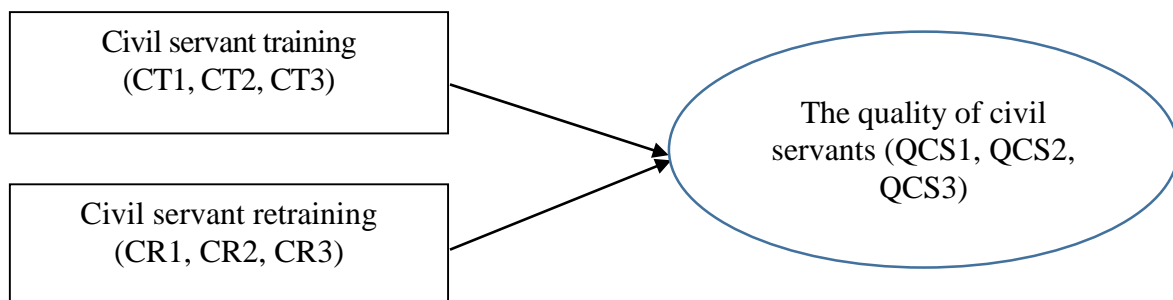


Figure 1. Research model

3. Research Methods

Qualitative and quantitative methods are both used in this study to approach theoretical framework and impacts of training and retraining on the quality of civil servants in practice.

- Qualitative method: The secondary data was collected and analyzed to make initial comments on theoretical research content to build the scale and research model. Then, in-depth interviews and group discussions were conducted to get comments on the assessment and initial research on the topic and main content of the research. From the collected opinions, the information was synthesized, analyzed and selected to complete the research theoretical framework.

- Quantitative method: The primary data was collected and analyzed from the survey of 240 commune-level local civil servants from 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh Province (Northern region), Quang Binh province (Central region), Binh Phuoc province (Southern region). The survey content was built according to the theoretical framework.

In quantitative research, the reliability of the scale and observed variables was tested; exploratory factor analysis was carried out; Regression analysis was performed to test research hypotheses and draw research conclusions. For primary data collection, there are two steps conducted: preliminary survey and official survey.

+ Preliminary survey: From the theoretical framework of civil servant training and retraining with the research model of 3 scales and 9 observed variables (Table 1, Figure 1), a survey questionnaire consisting of 9 questions corresponding to the 9 observed variables mentioned above was designed. According to Hai, D.H. (2019), the minimum sample size needed when doing exploratory factor analysis for a model with 3 scales and 9 observed variables is $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$. This survey was carried out with a sample size of $N = 240 > 45$ to ensure the reliability of data collection.

After the survey questionnaire was completely designed, the preliminary survey in a research area (Bac Ninh province) with a sample size of $N = 80 > 45$ civil servants of commune-level authorities. Preliminary survey results in Bac Ninh province show that the measurement scales and observed variables are reliable enough to be used in official surveys on a wider scale.

+ Official survey: The official survey was conducted in 3 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Bac Ninh province (Northern region), Quang Binh province (Central region), Binh Phuoc province (Northern region). The survey participants included 240 civil servants of commune-level authorities. The survey was conducted selectively: the participants are those who have been managers of commune-level authorities. The survey was conducted selectively; The preliminary interviews were performed to capture information about the participants, then the survey questionnaires were distributed based on their agreement to answer. The survey results received 240/240 valid votes, achieving a 100% response rate.

With the collected data, the scale testing and correlation analysis were conducted to test the research hypothesis.

4. Research results

Cronbach' alpha test is carried out to eliminate junk variables, avoiding the case of junk variables creating spurious factors when exploratory factors are analyzed; Identify the reliability of measurement scales and observed variables in the research model. The scales are reliable when they meet the Cronbach' alpha standard > 0.6 ; Observed variables are reliable when they meet the standard condition of Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 [Hai, D.H., 2019]. The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the research model are reliable for further analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Statistical results and testing results of the scales

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Civil servant training (CT)	CT1	240	3	5	4.32	.521	.649	CT1 = .392
	CT2	240	3	5	4.29	.539		CT2 = .384
	CT3	240	2	5	4.21	.538		CT3 = .401
2. Civil servant retraining (CR)	CR1	240	2	5	3.90	.615	.622	CR1 = .521
	CR2	240	2	5	3.87	.608		CR2 = .524
	CR3	240	2	5	3.74	.606		CR3 = .501

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
3. The quality of civil servants (QCS)	QCS1	240	3	5	4.00	.542	.638	QCS1 = .513
	QCS2	240	3	5	3.97	.541		QCS2 = .509
	QCS3	240	2	5	3.96	.548		QCS3 = .519
Valid N (listwise)		240						

Source: Author's survey results

Data in Table 2 shows that observations on the scales "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR), "The quality of civil servants" (QCS) are all rated at an average level. Mean > 3.74, statistically significant according to the defined Likert scale (1-5). However, the observed variables of the scale "Civil servant retraining" (BD) are evaluated at a lower level than "Civil servant training" (CT): Mean (CR1) = 3.90, Mean (CR2) = 3.87, Mean (CR3) = 3.74, shows that commune-level civil servants find that the local training policies hasn't been effectively implemented as expected. Of these, the lowest is Mean (CR3) = 3.74, confirming that many civil servants have not been guaranteed with their rights of learning and still, have not been encouraged to self-train, self - update and self - supplement knowledge and skills to well perform their duties. This reality poses a requirement for policy innovation so that civil servants can promote their proactive learning and ensure their learning rights to improve their quality and working capacity to serve the local civil service.

The testing results of the reliability of the scales and observed variables are the basis for exploratory factor analysis to be conducted. The exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed to preliminarily evaluate the unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the scales to have more basis for drawing research conclusions. The results of exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.817
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	1664.576
df	36
Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.683	52.033	52.033	4.683	52.033	52.033	4.683	52.033	52.033
2	1.352	15.024	67.058	1.352	15.024	67.058	1.352	15.024	67.058
3	1.003	11.145	78.202	1.003	11.145	78.202	1.003	11.145	78.202
4	.760	8.439	86.642						
5	.413	4.584	91.226						
6	.376	4.177	95.403						
7	.286	3.179	98.581						
8	.069	.767	99.349						
9	.059	.651	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Author's survey results

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
Civil servant training (CT)	CT1	.876		
	CT2	.872		
	CT3	.868		
Civil servant retraining (CR)	CR1		.773	
	CR2		.765	
	CR3		.747	
The quality of civil servants (QCS)	QCS1			.801
	QCS2			.802
	QCS3			.796

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Source: Author's survey results

In quantitative research, according to Hai, D.H. (2019), exploratory factor analysis is performed in accordance with the data set through the values: $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$; The Bartlett test has an observed significance level Sig. < 0.05 ; Eigenvalue ≥ 1 ; Total Variance Explained $\geq 50\%$; Factor Loading ≥ 0.5 . Data Table 3 and Table 4 show that:

- KMO coefficient = $0.817 > 0.5$, confirming that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for the data set; The Bartlett test has an observed significance level Sig. = $0.000 < 0.05$, showing that the observed variables are linearly correlated with the representative factor.

- Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = $78.202\% > 50\%$ shows that 78.202% of the variation of representative factors is explained by observed variables; All observed variables have Factor Loading > 0.5 , showing that the observed variables have good statistical significance.

The observed variables are selected into 03 factors corresponding to 03 original factors with Eigenvalues > 1 , showing that the original research model is maintained, including: 02 independent variables "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR) and 01 dependent variable "The quality of civil servants" (QCS) with a total of 9 observed variables with good statistical significance; hence, multivariate linear regression analysis can be performed to consider the relationship of the independent variables "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR) and the dependent variable "The quality of civil servants" (QCS) in the research model. The results of regression analysis are shown in Table 5, which is the basis for drawing research conclusions.

Table 5. Multivariable regression results**Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.022	.109		10.631	.000	
	Civil servant training (CT)	.571	.036	.585	19.839	.000	1.808
	Civil servant retraining (CR)	.429	.041	.475	6.610	.000	1.808

a. Dependent Variable: The quality of civil servants (QCS)
 R Square = .688; Durbin-Watson = 2.005

Source: Author's survey results

The data in table 5 show that:

+ R Square = .688, confirming that the scales "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR) explain 68.8% of the variation in the "The quality of civil servants" (QCS) scale.

+ VIF = 1.808 ($1 < \text{VIF} < 2$), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.005 ($1 < d < 3$), showing that the regression model has no autocorrelation phenomenon, confirming the scales "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR) are independent and both have impacts on the scale of "The quality of civil servants" (QCS).

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and has a positive value: B (CT) = 0.571, B (CR) = 0.429, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR) and 01 dependent variable "The quality of civil servants" (QCS).

On the basis of the generalized regression model $Y = B_0 + B_1 \cdot X_1 + B_2 \cdot X_2 + \dots + B_i \cdot X_i$ [Hai, D.H., 2019], the multivariate regression model of this study can be determined as: $QCS = 1.022 + 0.571 \cdot CT + 0.429 \cdot CR$.

In the above regression model, the regression coefficient shows the degree of correlation of the independent variables and the dependent variable in descending order: "Civil servant training" (CT), "Civil servant retraining" (CR).

5. Conclusion

From these figure and analysis, it can be seen that: Commune-level civil servants find the implementation of local training policies less effectively than expected. This means that the implementation of local training policies has not achieved the desired results of civil servants. Accordingly, many civil servants have not been guaranteed with their educational rights and have not been encouraged to self-improve, self - update and self – supplement knowledge and skills to well perform their assigned tasks. This poses a requirement for policy innovation by which civil servants' proactive learning and learning rights can be ensured so that their quality and working capacities can be improved to better serve the local civil service.

The findings suggest adjustment to training and retraining policies to improve the quality of civil servants and serve the people better, specifically: Civil servant training programs are developed and implemented in accordance with the competence framework of each job title and position; Training is based on the needs of civil servants associated with their job positions. This can be explained as follows:

- Firstly, Vietnamese current legal regulations on civil servant training and retraining do not set mandatory requirements for retraining civil servants according to the competence framework of their job title and position; There is no mandatory mechanism for state management agencies and agencies employing civil servants to survey the training needs of civil servants. Therefore, many localities have not paid enough attention not only to the development and implementation of training programs based on the competence framework of each job title and position but also to the training needs of civil servants.

- Secondly, society is constantly developing, which makes specialized knowledge of civil servants to be regularly updated and supplemented to adapt those social changes. Therefore, it is necessary for each civil servant to determine his or her own training needs to proactively self-study, self - update and self - supplement knowledge and skills in order to well perform the assigned tasks.

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