Training and Retraining Policies for Civil Servants in Vietnam

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Abstract

In practice of civil servant management in countries, training and retraining policies are developed and implemented as a main measure to improve the quality of civil servants, then build up a team of qualified and capable civil servants for serving the people. This study develops a theoretical framework on training and retraining policies and considers the impact of these policies on the quality of Vietnamese civil servants. The research model is developed with independent scales/variables "Training policies", "Retraining policies" and dependent scale/variable "The quality of civil servants". A direct survey was conducted with 350 commune-level civil servants from 5 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Thai Nguyen province, Lang Son province (Northern region), Quang Binh province (Central region), Binh Duong province, Bac Lieu province (Southern). The results show that the implementation of training policies to update and supplement working knowledge and skills for civil servants has not been effective and received little recognition from civil servants in localities; The implementation of training policies to update and supplement working knowledge and skills for civil servants has not been effective. The findings suggest solutions to make the more effective implementation of training and retraining policies for civil servants in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Local civil servants, Quality of civil servants, Training policies, Retraining policies, Vietnam.*

Introduction

Vietnam's local civil servants are on the payroll in agencies and organizations of the political system (Party agencies, state agencies, social organizations), divided by administrative levels: 63 provincial-level administrative units, 705 district-level administrative units and 10.599 commune-level administrative units [GSO, 2023]. Civil servants working in local authorities at commune-level are addressed on and subjects of the survey conducted in this study.

Training and retraining policies for commune-level civil servants is annually planned and implemented on the basis of law [VG, 2017] with the goal of building civil servants with qualities, capacities, and qualifications sufficient enough for serving the people and local development. In fact, training and retraining local civil servants are performed in accordance with the characteristics of the civil service and job positions and civil servants needs. General assessment [MOHA, 2023] shows that the annual training and retraining activities for civil servants have brought certain and meaningful achievements: Civil servants meet professional standards, civil servant rank standards and job position standards; the quality, qualifications, and capacity of civil servants are improved and gradually meet the requirements of administrative reform and building e-government and digital government after their participation in training and retraining programs.

However, the quality of civil servants is still a matter of concern; Training and retraining activities in localities have not been implemented effectively, affecting the overall public duty performance results. This suggests innovations and is topic of interest of managers and researchers. Hence, the necessity and significance of this study can be affirmed.

Literature Review

Civil Servant Training and Retraining Policies

Training policy is a commonly used as a measure in human resource management activities by organizations to build up and improve essential working competencies for employees to meet the job position requirements.

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In the practice of state management and civil servant management in Vietnam, policymakers have determined that "training is the process of systematically imparting and receiving knowledge and skills regulated for each educational level" [VG, 2017]. Central and local agencies, based on this affirmation, implement training policies for civil servants in order to equip them basic and specialized knowledge and skills related to their profession. Similarly, Anh, K.Q. (2023) agrees that training policies include develop and implement learning activities to provide and develop professional knowledge and skills for civil servants. Civil servant training activities include basic training (training to meet civil servant rank standards) and advanced training (professional development training at higher levels).

The research approaches can lead to the fact that a well-implemented training policy will help civil servants gain specialized knowledge, master specialized skills to well perform their assigned tasks. In addition, this study further emphasizes civil servant training should be carried out with scientific principles, compliance with laws and encouragement of civil servants' initiatives. On that basis, the research scale "Training policies" (TP) can be explained as: Training policies is developed and implemented to standardize professional qualifications for civil servants and enable them to meet the civil servant rank standards required by laws (TP1); Training policies are implemented as planned and with legal decentralization so that civil servants can proactively participate training programs and get encouraging results and efficiency (TP2); Training policies are developed and implemented to meet the learning needs and encourage/promote self-studying from civil servants (TP3).

In general sense, training policies are emphasized by researchers as a measure to organize learning activities to update, supplement, increase the knowledge and skills for civil servants to better perform their assigned professional tasks. In terms of civil servant management activities in Vietnam, civil servant training policies refer to organized and planned activities conducted by civil servant management agencies according to statutory authority [VG, 2017], which means to learning activities performed to equip, update and improve knowledge and working skills for civil servants; Help civil servants understand more and better perform assigned tasks. Tung, L.S. (2022) and Son, N.V. (2023) on the basis of current legal regulations in Vietnam, explain in detail that civil servant training policies mention to training programs to fulfill civil servant rank standards, provide knowledge and skills required by the job position. At the same time, they emphasize training policy implementation is aimed to equip and update basic knowledge of state management, professional knowledge and skills required by job positions so that civil servants can well perform their assigned tasks (keep work progress and quality of assigned work; well serve the people, create satisfaction and trust of the people).

The above research perspectives all imply an organized and influencing activities by competent agencies that help civil servants to update and supplement knowledge and working skills, meeting requirements of state management tasks and completing assigned professional tasks in accordance with Vietnamese laws and context. Therefore, the scale of "Retraining Policies" (RP) can be built with the main observations: Retraining policies are implemented to equip civil servants with state management knowledge to meet civil servant rank standards required by laws (RP1); Retraining policies are implemented update and supplement civil servants with specialized knowledge and skills required by their job position (RP2); Retraining policies are implemented to satisfy civil servants' learning needs and encourage their self-study (RP3).

Influences Of Training Policies and Retraining Policies on The Quality of Civil Servants

Civil servants are the ones who exercise state power to manage social development; therefore, the quality of civil servant is often clearly stated in laws of countries with general requirements appropriate to the characteristics of the civil service and specific requirements for each field and level of state agencies. In Vietnam, the assessment of civil servant quality is stipulated by laws with such criteria: Political quality, ethical quality; professional qualifications and expertise; working capacity; work results [VNA, 2008; VG, 2020].

Other studies also provide details of regulations on the quality of civil servants and confirm that the quality of civil servants is expressed in their ethical quality, professional qualifications, working capacity, and service attitude during their public duty performance and demonstrated through the work results. Trung, N.S. et al.

(2022) and Lan, V.T. (2023) emphasizes the quality of civil servants refers to ethical quality and working capacity (knowledge, skills) that meet the standards of civil servant ranks and job positions prescribed by law; Their application of knowledge and skills to during their assigned task implementation to achieve work results and efficiency, create satisfaction and trust of the people. On that basis, the scale of "The quality of civil servants" (QCS) has been developed with details, including: Civil servants have good moral qualities, meeting legal political standards (QCS1); Civil servants have professional qualifications and skills that meet the standards of civil servant rank and job position (QCS2); Civil servants have good working capacity - the ability to apply knowledge and skills that have been trained and retrained to well perform assigned tasks, achieve work results and efficiency (QCS3).

Thus, the quality of civil servants, in addition to political factors (moral qualities), is closely related to their trained and retrained knowledge and skills and the application of the knowledge and skills to achieve work results required by public service activities. This also shows that well-implemented training and retraining policies will help civil servants acquire appropriate knowledge and skills and proactively study and practice to update and supplement knowledge, appropriate skills for their jobs. Hence, a hypothesis of this study is: *Training policies (H1), fostering policies (H2) that are well implemented will be the main policy measures, having positive influences on the quality of civil servants.*

From the literature review, the theoretical framework on training and retraining policies and their influences on the quality of civil servants has been developed. The research model is determined with 3 scales: "Training policies" scale, "Retraining policies" scale (02 independent variables) and "The quality of civil servants" scale (01 dependent variable). The above scales include 9 observed variables, designed into 9 questions in the survey and measured using 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	**Training policies**	**TP**					
1	Training policies is developed and implemented to standardize professional qualifications for civil servants and enable them to meet the civil servant rank standards required by laws.	TP1					
2	Training policies are implemented as planned and with legal decentralization so that civil servants can proactively participate training programs and get encouraging results and efficiency.	TP2					
3	Training policies are developed and implemented to meet the learning needs and encourage/promote self-studying from civil servants.	TP3					
II	**Retraining policies**	**RP**					
4	Retraining policies are implemented to equip civil servants with state management knowledge to meet civil servant rank standards required by laws.	RP1					
5	Retraining policies are implemented update and supplement civil servants with specialized knowledge and skills required by their job position.	RP2					
6	Retraining policies are implemented to satisfy civil servants' learning needs and encourage their self-study.	RP3					
III	**The quality of civil servants**	**QCS**					
7	Civil servants have good moral qualities, meeting legal political standards.	QCS1					

| 8 | Civil servants have professional qualifications and skills that meet the standards of civil servant rank and job position. | QCS2 | | | | | |
| 9 | Civil servants have good working capacity - the ability to apply knowledge and skills that have been trained and retrained to well perform assigned tasks, achieve work results and efficiency. | QCS3 | | | | | |

Source: Compiled by the author through the review
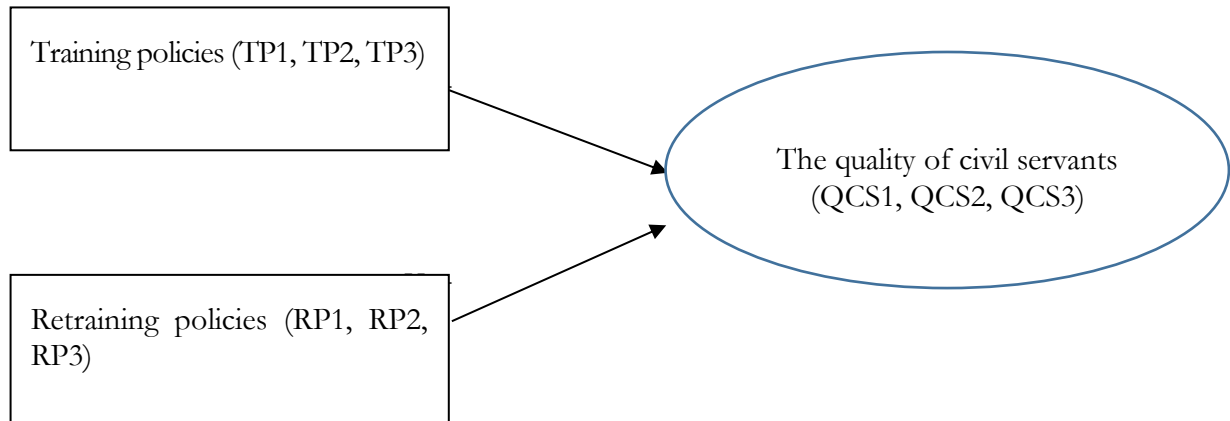
Research Model

Figure 1. Research Model

Methodology

In this study, the qualitative and quantitative methods are both employed. The qualitative method is used to collect and analyze secondary data and make initial reviews on theories and practice of influences of training and retraining policies on the quality of civil servants. The quantitative method is used to collect and analyze the primary data from a direct survey of 350 commune-level civil servants from 5 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Thai Nguyen Province, Lang Son Province (Northern region), Quang Binh province (Central region), Binh Duong province, Bac Lieu province (Southern region).

In quantitative research, with a research model of 03 scales including 9 observed variables, according to Hai, D.H. (2019), the minimum sample size needed for exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis is N = 9*5 = 45. In fact, a sample size of N = 350 civil servants (N > 45) was used, showing high reliability for conducting the survey. The survey was conducted selectively with survey respondents who are 350 commune-level civil servants with over 5 years of working experience in local government agencies. The preliminary interviews were performed to collect information about the participants, then the survey questionnaires were distributed based on their agreement to answer. The survey results received 350/350 valid responses, reaching a 100% response rate. With the collected data, the scale testing and regression analysis were carried out to test the relationship of the scales and draw research conclusions.

Findings

From the survey data collected from 350 commune-level civil servants, Cronbach' Alpha is tested to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable, meeting the standard conditions: Cronbach 'alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 [Hai, D.H., 2019] [Table 2].

Table 2. Statistical Results and Scale Testing Results

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Training policies (TP)	TP1 TP2 TP3	350 350 350	3 2 1	5 5 5	4.26 4.01 3.92	.532 .503 .512	.691	TP1 = .523 TP2 = .506 TP3 = .495
2. Retraining policies (RP)	RP1 RP2 RP3	350 350 350	1 1 2	5 5 5	3.97 3.82 3.75	.503 .482 .420	.638	RP1 = .491 RP2 = .427 RP3 = .421
3. The quality of civil servants (QCS)	QCS1 QCS2 QCS3	350 350 350	3 3 2	5 5 5	4.04 3.96 3.92	.519 .485 .473	.634	QCS1 = .513 QCS2 = .494 QCS3 = .503
Valid N (listwise)		350						

Source: Author's Survey Results

The data from Table 2 shows that observations on the scales "Training policies" (TP), "Retraining policies" (RP), "The quality of civil servants" (QCS) are all rated at an average level. Mean > 3.75, is statistically significant according to the defined Likert scale (1-5); The quality of civil servants meets the requirements of assigned task performance. However, the observed variables of the scale "Retraining policies" (RP) are evaluated at a lower level and are the lowest with Mean (RP3) = 3.75, showing that retraining policies have not been effectively developed and implemented to meet civil servants' learning needs; Retraining policies are still ineffective in encouraging civil servants to proactively study to update and supplement knowledge and skills for professional work. This greatly affects the quality of local civil servants in Vietnam today.

With the standard test value, all 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the research model continue to be used to perform exploratory factor analysis. The exploratory factor analysis is conducted with Varimax rotation to preliminarily evaluate the unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the scales. The analysis results are shown in Table 3, Table 4 below.

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.827
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1902.463
	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	4.406	48.959	48.959	4.406	48.959	48.959	4.406	48.959	48.959
2	1.370	15.226	64.185	1.370	15.226	64.185	1.370	15.226	64.185
3	1.020	11.335	75.520	1.020	11.335	75.520	1.020	11.335	75.520
4	.867	9.631	85.151						
5	.434	4.819	89.970						

6	.350	3.888	93.859								
7	.253	2.817	96.675								
8	.241	2.679	99.354								
9	.058	.646	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
Training policies (TP)	TP1	.792		
	TP2	.784		
	TP3	.780		
Retraining policies (RP)	RP1		.801	
	RP2		.796	
	RP3		.787	
The quality of civil servants (QCS)	QCS1			.791
	QCS2			.785
	QCS3			.771
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, exploratory factor analysis is performed in accordance with the data set through the following 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. [Hai, D.H., 2019].

The data in Table 3 and Table 4 show that: KMO = 0.827 > 0.5 confirms 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 % = 75,520% > 50% shows that 75,520% 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 were extracted into 03 factors corresponding to the 03 original factors with Eigenvalues > 1, showing that the original research model proposed is appropriate and remained the same, including 01 dependent variable: "The quality of civil servants" (QCS), 02 independent variables: "Training policies" (TP) and "Retraining policies" (RP) with a total of 9 observed variables with good statistical significance, which can allow Multivariate linear regression analysis to be carried out to examine the relationship of the independent variables "Training policies" (TP) and "Retraining policies" (RP) with the dependent variable "The quality of civil servants" (QCS).

Table 5. Multivariate Regression Results

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.068	.122		6.813	.000	

Training policies (TP)	.639	.051	.775	24.365	.000	1.775
Retraining policies (RP)	.361	.035	.225	1.482	.007	1.775
a. Dependent Variable: The quality of civil servants (QCS) Adjusted R Square: 0.682; Durbin-Watson: 2.102						

Source: Author's survey results

The data in Table 5 shows: R Square = .682 (R > 0), confirming that the scales "Training policies" (TP), "Retraining policies" (RP) explain 68.2% of the variation of the scale "the quality of civil servants" (QCS). VIF = 1.775 (1 < VIF < 2), shows that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.102 (1 < d < 3), shows that the regression model has no autocorrelation phenomenon, confirming the scales "Training policies" (TP), "Retraining policies" (RP) are independent in nature and have the same impact on the scale of "The quality of civil servants" (QCS).

The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Training policies" (TP), "Retraining policies" (RP) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and has a positive value: B (TP) = 0.639, B (RP) = 0.361, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Training policies" (TP), "Retraining policies" (RP) and 01 dependent variable "The quality of civil servants" (QCS); Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted; The degree of correlation of the independent and dependent variables in ascending order is: "Training policies" (TP), "Retraining policies" (RP). The regression model of this study is determined as: QCS = 1.068 + 0.639*TP + 0.361*RP.

Conclusion

Based on the above statistical, analytical and testing results, research conclusions can be concluded that civil servants find that the retraining policies have not highly effective when implemented in their localities because: The developed and implemented have not been much of civil servants' learning needs; These policies are still ineffective in encouraging civil servants to proactively study to update and supplement knowledge and skills for professional work. This has negative influences on the quality of local civil servants in Vietnam today; that is, civil servants have not proactively updated and supplemented their knowledge and skills to develop their working capacity.

The findings suggest solutions, which are: Develop and implement competency – based retraining policies based on civil servants' learning needs which help them to meet job position requirements. Competency-based retraining programs should be appropriate to each group of learners as well as their working capacity (according to each commune-level civil servant title). This requires the job position system, job descriptions, and competency framework to be completed to serve as a basis of competency-based retraining for civil servants. Along with that, local authorities are suggested to implement retraining policies in the direction of encouraging civil servants to regularly self-study and practice to update and supplement knowledge, skills and expertise to meet job position requirements. That helps civil servants raise self – study awareness, proactively learn and practice to update and supplement knowledge, skills, and expertise to well perform assigned tasks.

Implementation of competency - based retraining policies meeting civil servants' needs and encouragement of civil servants' self-studying is considered significant in the non-stop changing society which has great effects on public service activities, creates new issues, requires civil servants to continuously update and supplement new knowledge and skills. When civil servants are proactive and self-conscious in updating and supplementing new knowledge and skills, they will be able to adapt to social changes and best perform their assigned tasks; at the same time, the quality of civil servants are improved to meet requirements of public service activities and serving the people.

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