Research Article

Education, Training, And The Quality Of Vietnamese Public Servants

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ARTICLEINO	ABSTRACT
	In each country, education and training are identified as a key measure to improve the quality of public servants with the aim that these public servants could be competent to serve the people effectively. This study refers to education, training, and the quality of public servants as research objects; specifically focuses on the impacts of education and training on the quality of public servants. The theoretical framework of the study has been developed with three scales: 02 independent variables "education" and "training", and 01 dependent variables "the quality of civil servants". A direct survey of 300 commune-level civil servants from Hung Yen Province (representing the Northern region of Vietnam), Quang Nam Province (representing the Central region of Vietnam) and Binh Phuoc Province (representing the Southern region of Vietnam) was also carried out. The results show that public servants undervalued training policies in their localities, that is, training policies to update and supplement their professional knowledge and skills have not been implemented effectively. The findings suggest adjustments as recommendations for better implementation of education and training policies to public servants.
	Key words: Education; Training; Public servants; Quality of public servants.

1. Introduction

Vietnamese public servants in localities are permanent staff working in 63 provincial-level administrative units (provinces and municipal cities), 705 district-level administrative units (districts in provinces and cities, towns, provincial cities, cities of municipal cities), 10.599 commune-level administrative units (communes, wards, commune - level towns) [GSO, 2023]. Therefore, education and training are regularly implemented in order to foster public servants who competent enough to well serve the people (VG, 2017). Based on characteristics of public service, job positions and the needs of public servants, education and training are annually conducted by central and local government agencies as planned.

In general, annual education and training activities for public servants have achieved considerable results: improving qualities, qualifications and working competence of public servants; foster public servants to meet professional standards, public servant rank standards and job position standards. However, the quality of public servants has been narrowed not only to meeting the requirements of administrative reform and digital transformation but also to fulfill foreign language competence and computer skills which have negative impacts on their public service performance (MOHA, 2023).

These current limitations in the quality of public servants have required innovation in public servant management of central and local government agencies. Therefore, researches on education and training for public servants as well as the impact of education and training on the quality of public servants are urgent needs so that more scientific arguments and evidence for management activities of state agencies could be provided. Also, the study on education, training and the quality of Vietnamese public servants is of great significance in this case.

2. Literature review

2.1. Education and training for public servants

Education is a policy measure used by an organization to equip basic and necessary competencies for their employees who then can appropriately be allocated to specific job positions. In terms of management, Vietnamese

executive officials affirm that education is the process of systematically imparting and receiving knowledge and skills regulated for each educational level (VG, 2017). This is the direct legal basis for central and local government agencies to implement education policies to provide public servants with basic knowledge and skills and, at the same time, develop their in-depth knowledge and skills. With reference to research, a similar view of education is also expressed. According to Le, D.T. et al (2023), education is carried out to build up professional knowledge and skills for public servants, including basic level (meeting public servants' prescribed rank standards) and advanced level (developing public servants' professional knowledge and skills at higher education to set up a team of experts in public service activities).

Both executive officials and researchers have dignified the role and significance of education for public servants. Accordingly, well-implemented education will enable public servants to get the point of their job positions as well as be proficient in professional skills so that their job responsibilities can be well-completed. Moreover, education for public servants should be carried out with scientific goals, content, and principles, which both comply with the law and encourage public servants' initiative. Based on preceding studies and experts' experience, the research scales on professional education for public servants (EPS) have been developed, specifically: Public servants participate in education to meet rank standards - standardize professional qualifications according to public servant rank standards (EPS1); Education policies for public servants are regularly implemented, complying with public servant management principles in terms of administrative hierarchy and legal decentralization – education for public servants must be based on public servant rank standards and specific job positions (EPS2); Education policies are implemented by public servants' needs; promote public servants' self-study awareness (EPS3).

The term "training" has been emphasized by researchers with the general meaning of supplementing and increasing people's knowledge and skills. According to Tung, L.S. (2022), training for public servants is carried out based on common regulations to public servants, including training programs according to public servant rank standards, training programs to provide knowledge and skills to meet job position requirements; training for public servants is to equip and update knowledge of state management, professional knowledge and skills required by job positions so that public servants can well perform their assigned tasks and raise their awareness of serving the people, which helps to increase the satisfaction level of the people with public duty performance of state agencies. Sharing the same opinion, Son, N.V. (2023) affirms that training for public servants is an organized and purposeful process of influence by authorized agencies to update and supplement knowledge and working skills to meet the requirements of public management tasks and assigned professional tasks.

The above research viewpoints, along the same lines, are both associated with specific research conducted in Vietnam and consistent with Vietnamese regulations on training activities for public servants: Training is an activity to equip, update, and improve knowledge and working skills for public servants; helps public servants more understand and better perform their assigned tasks (VG, 2017). Providing scientific arguments, the preceding studies have explained and confirmed the implementation of training policies is to supplement knowledge and skills for public servants; and to maintain a team of public servants with sufficient qualities and competence to meet the requirements of serving the people. In addition to organizing training activities as prescribed, public servants are encouraged to have self-training and promote their proactive learning, which supports the new training policies to be truly effective. Based on the key points drawn from studies on training for public servants by Tung, L.S. (2023) and Son, N.V. (2023), and by current Vietnamese regulations in Vietnam (VG, 2017), research scales on training for public servants (TPS) have been developed, specifically: Public servants train for state management knowledge to meet rank standards (TPS1); Public servants receive annual training on specialized knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of job positions and the need of updating and supplementing professional knowledge and skills (TPS2); Public servants are encouraged to foster self - training, self - update and self - supplement of knowledge and skills to well perform their assigned tasks (TPS3). Specialized knowledge training is quite diverse in all areas of expertise in public service activities, designed according to specialized topics and deployed to public servants with regular updates and supplements so that they can promptly keep up with and apply the new knowledge and skills in performing public duties.

Thus, in terms of general principles, education and training for public servants must meet legal compliance requirements to provide, update, and supplement professional knowledge and skills for public servants; be by public servant rank standards and job positions prescribed by law; agree with education and training plans and the needs of fostering competent public servants from central and local authorities. At the same time, education and training for public servants must promote the spirit of self-awareness and proactive learning of public servants; and ensure transparency and fairness in learning opportunities for all public servants so that their motivation to be proficient and contribute to the public service can be created. Then, education and training do become primary and significant measures, having positive impacts on the quality of public servants.

Therefore, the research hypothesis is: *That education (H1) and training (H2) are well implemented is of great significance and the main policy measure that has a positive impacts on the quality of public servants.*

2.2. The quality of public servants

Among issues related to state management, the quality of public servants is the top concern because it plays a decisive role to the operational efficiency of state agencies. Public duty performance in practice shows that the quality of public servants in central and local agencies is not often at the same level because of different influencing factors, creating disparities in terms of quality among public servants of central and local agencies.

In terms of management, Vietnamese managers define quality as "all characteristics of an entity that enable the entity to satisfy intended needs" (MOSTE, 1999). This is a legal standard for quality mainly applied in state management activities, including public service performance appraisal of public servants. About public servant management, the quality of public servants is affirmed by their qualities, qualifications, working competence, and service attitude in the process of performing public duties and expressed through work results (VG, 2020). Some researchers also have similar views when affirming that the quality of public servants refers to their qualities, qualifications, competence, service attitude, and public duty performance results (Trung, N.S. et al., 2022). In addition, Lan, V.T. (2023) asserts that the quality of public servants is the value expressed through qualities and competence (knowledge, skills) that meet rank standards and job positions prescribed by law.

It can be seen that research perspectives and legal regulations on the quality of public servants are similar and based on the principle of combining science of human resource management and legal documents prescribed in accordance with specific conditions of each country. Moreover, the above research perspectives on "quality" all refer to the value of entities (people, things) through their characteristics when placed in specific conditions. For public servants, consideration of their values is closely related to work results; That is, public servants prove that their qualities and competence meet the requirements of their assigned tasks. From the aforementioned research approaches, mainly given by Lan, V.T. (2023) and current legal regulations, the theory of the research scales on the quality of public servants (QPS) has been developed, including Public servants have good qualities and meet political standards and public service ethics (QPS1); Public servants have professional qualifications and knowledge that meet rank standards and job positions in public service activities (QPS2); Public servants have competence and work results that meet practical work requirements associated with job titles and positions in public service activities (QPS3).

From the literature review, a theoretical framework on education, training, and quality for public servants has been developed with a model of 3 factors/scales: Scale "Education for public servants", scale "Training for public servants" (02 independent variables) and scale "Quality of public servants" (01 dependent variables). These scales include 9 observed variables, designed into 9 questions of a 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. The theoretical framework

No	Scales	Code	5-level Likert scale				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	**Education for public servants**	**EPS**					
1	Public servants participate in education to meet rank standards - standardize professional qualifications according to public servant rank standards.	EPS1					
2	Education policies for public servants are regularly implemented, complying with public servant management principles in terms of administrative hierarchy and legal decentralization – education for public servants must be based on public servant rank standards and specific job positions.	EPS2					
3	Education policies are implemented by public servants' needs; and promote public servants' self-study awareness.	EPS3					
II	**Training for public servants**	**TPS**					
1	Public servants train for state management knowledge to meet rank standards.	TPS1					
2	Public servants receive annual training on specialized knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of job positions and the need to update and supplementing professional knowledge and skills.	TPS2					
3	Public servants are encouraged to foster self-training, self - update and self - supplement of knowledge and skills to well perform their assigned tasks.	TPS3					
III	**Quality of public servants**	**QPS**					
1	Public servants have good qualities and meet political standards and public service ethics.	QPS1					
2	Public servants have professional qualifications and knowledge that meet rank standards and job positions in public service activities.	QPS2					
3	Public servants have competence and work results that meet practical work requirements associated with job titles and positions in public service activities.	QPS3					

Source: Compiled by the authors from the literature review
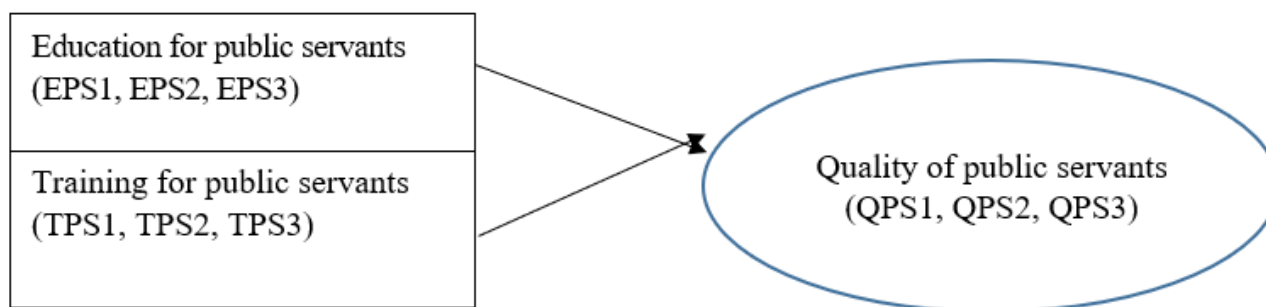
Research model

Figure 1. Research model

3. Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative methods are used to approach and conduct the research on the impacts of education and training on the quality of public servants with a research sample N = 300 and a survey carried out in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Hung Yen province (Northern region), Quang Nam province (Central region), Binh Phuoc province (Southern region).
- Qualitative method: Secondary data were collected and analyzed to give initial findings on the theoretical and practical research on the influence of education and training on the quality of public servants. Then, the author conducts in-depth interviews to collect opinions on these initial findings to complete the theoretical framework and draw practical research conclusions.
- Quantitative method: Primary data were collected and analyzed in the form of a direct survey of 300 commune-level public servants from 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam with issues according to the given theoretical framework. With the obtained results, exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis were conducted to test the relationship between the scales and the proposed research hypothesis. According to Hai, D.H. (2019), the minimum sample size needed to perform the above analysis for the model with 3 scales and 9 observed variables of this study is N = 9*5 = 45.
The survey to collect opinions of 300 commune-level public servants in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam was conducted with a sample size of N = 300 > 45 to ensure the reliability of data collection. The survey results are: 300/300 commune-level public servants agreed to take part in the survey and 300/300 valid answer sheets were collected, reaching a 100% valid response rate. With the data collected from the survey, the reliability of the scale and observed variables were tested; exploratory factor analysis, and regression analysis were performed to test the research hypotheses and draw research conclusions.

4. Findings

From the theoretical research framework, the survey collecting opinions of 300 commune-level civil servants was conducted. Then, a Cronbach's Alpha test was carried out 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 when 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 testing results of the scales

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Education for public servants (EPS)	EPS1 EPS2 EPS3	300 300 300	1 1 1	5 5 5	3.96 4.11 4.02	.521 .493 .542	.711	EPS1 = .473 EPS2 = .466 EPS3 = .453
2. Training for public servants (TPS)	TPS1 TPS2 TPS3	300 300 300	1 1 2	5 5 5	3.77 3.81 3.65	.553 .582 .620	.608	TPS1 = .393 TPS2 = .417 TPS3 = .422
3. Quality of public servants (QPS)	QPS1 QPS2 QPS3	300 300 300	1 1 2	5 5 5	3.94 4.02 4.10	.479 .465 .447	.710	QPS1 = .521 QPS2 = .482 QPS3 = .513
Valid N (listwise)		300						

Source: Authors' survey results

The data in Table 2 shows that observations on the scales "Education for Public Servants" (EPS), "Training for Public Servants" (TPS), and "Quality of Public Servants" (QPS) are all rated at an average level. Mean > 3.6, statistically significant according to the defined Likert scale (1-5); Public servants are assessed to be qualified to meet the requirements of performing assigned tasks. However, the observed variables of the scale "Training for public servants" (TPS) are evaluated at a lower level with Mean (TPS1) = 3.77, Mean (TPS2) = 3.81, Mean (TPS3) = 3.65, showing that there are several public servants who have not proactively updated and supplemented knowledge and skills to develop their competence; training policies are still ineffective in encouraging public servants to proactively study to update and supplement knowledge and skills for professional tasks. This reveals factors that greatly affect the quality of local public servants in Vietnam today.

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

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.794
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1645.685
	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	4.795	52.155	52.155	4.795	52.155	52.155	4.385	47.505	47.505
2	1.439	14.860	66.914	1.439	14.860	66.914	1.796	18.838	66.433
3	1.134	11.483	78.285	1.134	11.482	78.285	1.187	11.064	77.497
4	.771	8.453	86.627						
5	.431	4.675	91.302						
6	.389	4.106	95.408						
7	.293	3.141	98.549						
8	.079	.766	99.315						
9	.069	.685	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Source: Authors' survey results

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix				
Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
Education for public servants (EPS)	EPS1	.802		
	EPS2	.781		
	EPS3	.810		
Training for public servants (TPS)	TPS1		.811	
	TPS2		.786	
	TPS3		.809	
Quality of public servants (QPS)	QPS1			.812
	QPS2			.786
	QPS3			.761
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.				

Source: Authors' survey results

In quantitative research, according to Hai, D.H. (2019), exploratory factor analysis is performed by the data set satisfying 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 ≥ 50%; Factor Loading ≥ 0.5. The data in Table 3 and Table 4 show that: KMO = 0.815 > 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 shows that the observed variables are linearly correlated with the representative factor; Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = 78.174% > 50% shows

that 78.174% 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: "Quality of public servants" (QPS), 02 independent variables: "Education for public servants" (EPS) and "Training for public servants" (TPS) with a total of 9 observed variables with good statistical significance, which allow multivariable linear regression analysis to be carried out to examine the relationship of the independent variables "Education for public servants" (EPS) and "Training for public servants" (TPS) with the dependent variable "Quality of public servants" (QPS).

Table 5. Multivariate regression results

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.976	.121		7.911	.000	
	Education for public servants (EPS)	.647	.048	.798	25.455	.000	1.805
	Training for public servants (TPS)	.363	.032	.212	1.358	.007	1.805
a. Dependent Variable: Quality of public servants (QPS) Adjusted R Square: 0.696; Durbin-Watson: 2.106							

Source: Authors' survey results

The data in Table 5 shows: R Square = .696, confirming that the scales "Education for public servants" (EPS) and "Training for public servants" (TPS) explain 69.6% of the variation of the scale "Quality of public servants" (QPS). VIF = 1.805 (1 < VIF < 2), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.106 (1 < d < 3), showing that the regression model does not have autocorrelation. The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Education for public servants" (EPS) and "Training for public servants" (TPS) are both statistically significant with Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and have a positive value: B (DT) = 0.647, B (BD) = 0.363, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Education for public servants" (EPS) and "Training for public servants" (TPS) and 01 dependent variables "The quality of public servants" (QPS); Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted; The degree of correlation of the independent and dependent variables in ascending order is: "Training for public servants" (TPS) and "Education for public servants" (EPS). The multivariable regression model of this study is determined as QPS = 0.976 + 0.647*EPS + 0.363*TPS.

5. Conclusion

With the above analysis and testing results, the research conclusion is confirmed, that is, public servants undervalue Vietnamese training policies which haven't been highly effective in their localities. Also, there has been no strong encouragement for public servants to proactively study to update and supplement knowledge and skills to serve their professional work. This situation leads to the fact that a considerable number of public servants have not proactively updated and supplemented their knowledge and skills to upgrade their working competence. This is a factor that greatly affects the quality of Vietnamese public servants in localities today.

These findings suggest related issues referring to implementation of appropriate training policies, in the direction of encouraging public servants to study and regular train to update and supplement professional knowledge, skills to meet job position requirements in public service activities. Accordingly, local authorities, in their role as entities to manage and employ public servants, in addition to implementing training policies to meet rank standards and job position requirements, need to carry out policies encouraging public servants to regularly have self - training and promote their proactive learning to update and supplement professional knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of public service activities in the trend of the social change.

Implementing the incentive policy is necessary and of great significance because society is nonstop changing and developing; the changes of society always affect public service activities, requiring a lot of new information and knowledge that needs to be updated for public servants. If public servants do not promptly recognize these changes to proactively learn and government agencies do not have regular incentive policies, it will lead to a situation in public servants lack the initiative to update and supplement new knowledge by social development trends for practical application during their public duty performance. This will hurt the quality and work efficiency of public servants and government agencies.

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