

Assessing The Qualifications, Capacity And Work Results Of Vietnamese Civil Servants

Nguyen Toan Thang^{1*}, Ngo Sy Trung², Vu Thi Lan³,
Luu Thi Kim Que⁴, Bui Thi Phuong Trang⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} National Academy of Public Administration, Hanoi City, Vietnam

^{1*}Corresponding author; Email: thangnapa70@gmail.com;

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4797-4552>

²Email: ngosytrung01@yahoo.com;

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2820-8981>

³Email: lanvt83@yahoo.com;

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2578-4157>

⁴Email: luukimque@gmail.com;

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1781-8179>

⁵Email: trangbtp0713@gmail.com;

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7192-1548>

Abstract

Vietnam's local government consists of three levels (province, district, commune), in which the commune is the lowest level, directly implementing the State's policies and laws to the people. Therefore, the work results of commune-level civil servants play an important role, affirming the effectiveness of management activities and the prestige of government agencies. From the legal aspect, according to the provisions of Vietnamese law, the work results of the duties of commune-level civil servants are reflected in the progress, quality of assigned tasks and people's satisfaction; it is affected by many factors, such as: subjective factors (qualification, capacity, working attitude... of civil servants); objective factors (remuneration policy, facilities, technology... of the agency). This study refers to two subjective factors that affect the work results of commune-level civil servants, which are the subject's professional qualifications and ability to perform tasks. The objective of the study was determined to show the relationship and level of influence of the factors of professional qualifications, expertise (PQ) and work capacity (WC) to work results of Vietnam commune-level civil servants (WR). With the research scale built, the author conducted a survey of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 6 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Bac Giang

province, Bac Ninh province (North region), Quang Binh province, Quang Tri province (Central region), An Giang Province, Dong Thap Province (Southern region). The survey is conducted selectively, whereby the respondents are those who have worked as leaders of commune-level government agencies for at least 3 years. Research results show that local leaders underestimate the practical capacity of commune-level civil servants, greatly affecting the performance of their duties. From the results of this study, the author discusses the issue of appropriate policies for commune-level civil servants to promote their professional qualifications and practical working capacity, contributing to improving the quality of commune-level civil servants in Vietnam.

Keywords: Commune-level civil servants; Professional qualifications, expertise; Work capacity; Work result.

1. Research introduction

The local government of Vietnam is divided into: 63 provincial governments; 705 district governments and 10,599 commune governments (GSO, 2022; WIKIPEDIA, 2022). Each level of government is organized, consisting of an elected body known as the People's Council and an executive authority which is the statutory People's Committee (VNA, 2015). The civil service staffing of the commune-level government includes the prescribed titles: Chief of Police, Commander of Military, Office - Statistics, Land Administration - Construction - Urban - Agriculture - Environment, Finance - accounting, Justice - civil status, Culture - society (VG, 2011; MOHA, 2019).

The evaluation of the work result of duties of commune-level civil servants annually is carried out by local government agencies in accordance with law with 4 levels: Excellent completion of tasks; complete the task well; complete mission; did not complete the mission (VG, 2020). According to the annual general assessment, the vast majority of commune-level civil servants complete and well fulfill their assigned tasks; from which the implementation of the local economic, social and political development tasks is ensured; commune-level civil servants are standardized in terms of professional qualifications to meet rank standards and job position requirements. However, professional qualifications, expertise and practical capacity to perform tasks are still uneven and inadequate, affecting the performance of assigned tasks (MOHA, 2020). As a result, the work results of commune-level civil servants have not really met the requirements of local

development governance in the context of reform and serving the people (VG, 2021).

This fact is posing challenges for local leaders in improving the quality of civil servants and the management efficiency of government agencies. To help solve this problem, it is necessary to study and survey the practice of public service activities of commune-level civil servants. In that context, this research paper was conducted with the aim of providing scientific information for the management and policy making of the state on commune-level civil servants. The author conducts theoretical research, surveys and evaluates the practice of 300 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 6 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Bac Giang province, Bac Ninh province (Northern region), Quang Binh province, Quang Tri province (Central region), An Giang province, Dong Thap province (Southern region). The survey results provide objective information for the author to make research conclusions and policy suggestions suitable to the conditions of Vietnam in the present and future period.

2. Research overview

2.1. Professional qualifications, expertise of civil servants

Professional qualifications, expertise of civil servants are the knowledge, skills and professions that each individual is trained and fostered before being recruited as civil servants and continues to be trained and fostered to meet the needs of the public mission requirements of the agency at each stage of development. This is a clearly shown and easily identifiable criterion on the basis of diplomas and certificates and is a fundamental condition for civil servants to perform well their assigned tasks. Many researchers affirm that professional qualifications are the basic and fundamental criteria for assessing the professional competence - quality of human resources in the organization. (Dung, T.K., 2011; Ha, L.T., 2011).

According to the provisions of Vietnamese law (VNA, 2008), the criteria for the professional qualifications, expertise of civil servants are specifically determined according to the standards of civil service ranks (employees, officials, specialists, specialists key, senior specialist) and according to job position requirements. In addition, civil servants must also meet the basic requirements for foreign languages, informatics, and state management knowledge in accordance with current laws (MIC, 2014; MOET, 2014). Based on the provisions of current Vietnamese law and the previous research results mentioned, the author summarizes the criteria for professional

qualifications, expertise of commune-level civil servants, including:

- PQ1. Qualified professional qualifications. Commune-level civil servants attain professional qualifications according to the prescribed standards of civil servant ranks prescribed for each rank (specialist, main specialist, senior specialist), expressed through diplomas granted by competent educational institutions.

- PQ2. Qualified knowledge of foreign languages and informatics. Commune-level civil servants meet the standards of knowledge, computer skills and foreign languages to meet the requirements of the job position, demonstrated through diplomas and certificates of training granted by competent agencies.

- PQ3. Qualified Knowledge of state management. Commune-level civil servants have knowledge of state management according to the standards of civil servant ranks prescribed for each rank (specialist, main expert, senior specialist), demonstrated through diplomas and training certificates issued by issuing authority.

- PQ4. Specialized knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of the job position. Commune-level civil servants have specialized knowledge and skills required to meet job position requirements; this is reflected in the annual training, and the content of this training is quite diverse in all ways that the professional fields in state management activities are associated with the job position and according to the requirements of the job position that the public is interested in undertaking.

Professional qualifications, expertise in addition to ensuring standards in form (diplomas, certificates), must also be expressed in terms of content (work practices). Accordingly, commune-level civil servants must make the most of their trained and fostered knowledge and skills to best perform their assigned tasks. Only then, professional qualifications, expertise really reflect the quality of civil servants.

2.2. Work capacity of civil servants

Competency is understood quite commonly, it is “characteristic of an individual that demonstrates a degree of proficiency, being able to competently and reliably perform a certain activity or type of activity” (EPH, 2002), or competence is “the ability to work well thanks to ethical qualities and professional qualifications” (Lan, N., 2006). In the field of research, many

studies refer to the criteria of human resource performance in the organization, including the ability to perform assigned tasks (Diem, N.V. and Quan, N.N., 2010; Dung, T.K., 2011). In Vietnam, the Law on Cadres and Civil Servants clearly stipulates the criteria for civil servants' ability to perform their duties according to the assigned work norms associated with the working position and according to the requirements of the job position (VNA, 2008). According to these approaches, the capacity of civil servants to perform their duties can be understood as the ability to perform assigned tasks based on their qualities, knowledge and skills, to meet the requirements of the job position.

From a legal perspective, commune-level civil servants have the following functions and tasks: Advising on policy and law making; organize the implementation of laws and policies; inspect and evaluate the performance of tasks within the scope of local state management (VNA, 2008; VNA, 2015). On the basis of these regulations, the commune-level government agencies continue to concretize the capacity of civil servants to perform their duties according to the job norms appropriate to the job position and confirmed through the assessment process civil servants every year. From here, the author has more basis to concretize the capacity to perform tasks into basic criteria and general requirements for commune-level civil servants: Advisory capacity; capacity to organize and implement tasks; ability to test and evaluate.

- WC1. Good advisory capacity. Commune-level civil servants have the capacity to advise on policy making, and to advise on professional activities in professional fields associated with employment positions in the agency. That requires that in addition to them having professional qualifications suitable for the job position, they must also have the necessary competencies for consulting, which are: Research and synthesis capacity in the field of professional activities; ability to draft documents so that all work is transformed from ideas into specific professional products to advise competent authorities to decide on implementation.

- WC2. Good organizational capacity to perform tasks. Commune-level civil servants have the capacity to work results to organize and perform professional tasks to ensure the progress and quality of assigned tasks. That requires from them the basic requirements, which are: Assess and analyze the situation of performing professional tasks in a scientific and timely manner; develop a plan to execute the task in a reasonable and feasible manner.

- WC3. Good inspection and evaluation capacity: Commune-level civil servants have the ability to inspect and evaluate to proactively grasp the situation, detect and promptly correct errors or unreasonable or inappropriate issues to advise on policy formulation and adjustment; adjust the plan to achieve high results in the process of performing professional tasks.

2.3. Work result of civil servants

Work result represent the criteria for assessing the quality of civil servants, which are regulated by the laws of each country and mentioned in many research works (Trung, N.S., 2021). Vietnamese law also stipulates that the performance of duties is one of the contents of annual civil servant evaluation quite clearly. Accordingly, the work result of task execution are shown in three aspects: Ensuring the progress of the assigned tasks; ensure the quality of execution of assigned tasks; create people's satisfaction (VG, 2020).

- WR1. Ensure the progress of the assigned tasks. In public service activities, each task assigned to perform has a deadline for completion. Commune-level civil servants are responsible for ensuring the progress of task execution according to the set plan or specific assigned tasks.

- WR2. Ensure the quality of execution of assigned tasks. In public service activities, each assigned task has a product quality goal to be achieved. Commune-level civil servants are responsible for ensuring the quality of tasks according to the set plan or specific tasks assigned.

- WR3. Create people's satisfaction. Commune-level civil servants as well as civil servants in general have the responsibility to wholeheartedly serve the people, putting the people's interests above personal interests; respect the people; fair treatment and protection of the people's legitimate rights and interests. Therefore, civil servants have an obligation to create satisfaction for the people when dealing with their requests.

From the above overview, the author builds a research theoretical framework with a 3-factor model. The research scale and research model includes 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 10 observed variables when studying the influence of qualifications, capacity to work results of Vietnam commune-level civil servants. The author designed the survey according to these observed variables and measured by the Likert measure 5 levels: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No comments; 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	Professional qualifications, expertise of commune-level civil servants	PQ					
1	Qualified professional qualifications	PQ1					
2	Qualified knowledge of foreign languages and informatics	PQ2					
3	Qualified Knowledge of state management	PQ3					
4	Specialized knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of the job position	PQ4					
II	Work capacity of commune-level civil servants	WC					
1	Good advisory capacity	WC1					
2	Good organizational capacity to perform tasks	WC2					
3	Good inspection and evaluation capacity	WC3					
III	Work result of commune-level civil servants	WR					
1	Ensure the progress of the assigned tasks	WR1					
2	Ensure the quality of execution of assigned tasks	WR2					
3	Create people's satisfaction	WR3					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

Research models

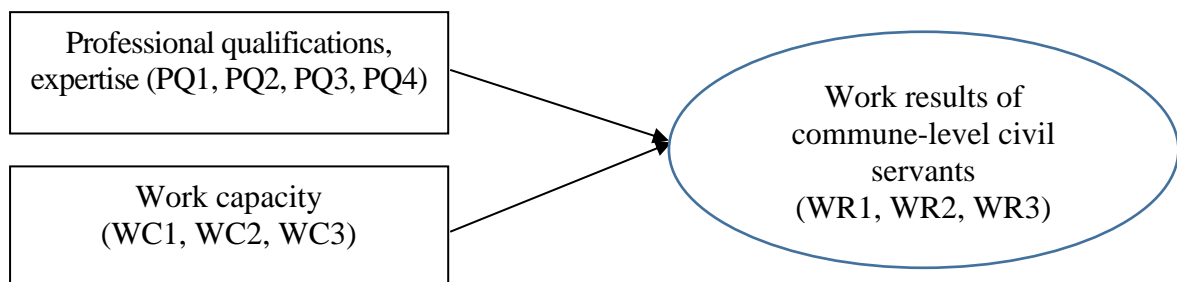


Figure 1. Research model

Research hypothesis

H1: Professional qualifications, expertise has a correlation/impact on the work results of commune-level civil servants.

H2: Work capacity has a correlation/impact on the work results of commune-level civil servants.

3. Research methods

The author uses a qualitative method (collection and analysis of secondary data - published documents) combined with a

quantitative method (collection and analysis of primary data in the form of surveys and surveys close). The investigation and survey is carried out in two steps: Preliminary investigation and official investigation.

a) Preliminary investigation

In this study, the minimum sample size required for factor analysis for the 3-scale and 10-observed model of this study is $N = 10 \times 5 = 50$ (Hai, D.H. et al., 2018). The author carried out the survey with sample size $N = 300 > 50$ to ensure the reliability of data collection. The survey sheet was designed and completed, the author conducted a preliminary survey in Bac Ninh province with a sample size of $N = 70$ leaders of commune-level government agencies. Preliminary survey results show that the observed variables are reliable so that they can be used in the official survey on a broader scale.

b) Formal investigation

From the minimum sample size $N = 50$ determined by scientific method, the author carried out the actual survey with sample size $N = 300$ ($N > 50$) showing high reliability when conducting survey research. The author conducted a formal survey in 6 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Bac Giang province, Bac Ninh province (Northern region), Quang Binh province, Quang Tri province (Central region), An Giang province, Dong Thap province (Southern region). The survey is conducted selectively, whereby the people surveyed are those who are leaders of commune-level government agencies at least 3 years. The survey was carried out with the consent of the respondents after the author's preliminary interview. The survey results were: 300/300 people agreed to answer and 292/300 valid answer sheets, achieving a valid response rate 97.3%. The characteristics of the study sample showed that the majority (292/300 people, accounting for 71.6%) of the survey respondents had more than 5 years in position of leaders of commune-level government agencies (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the study sample

Case Processing Summary						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Age * Years	292	100.0%	0	0.0%	292	100.0%

Gender * Age * Time Crosstabulation
Count

Time			Age			Total
			< 35	35-45	>45	
3-5 years	Gender	Male	25	21		46
		Female	18	7		25
	Total		43	28		71
6-10 years	Gender	Male		99		99
		Female		45		45
	Total			144		144
> 10 years	Gender	Male			37	37
		Female			40	40
	Total				77	77
Total	Gender	Male	25	120	37	182
		Female	18	52	40	110
	Total		43	172	77	292

Source: Author's survey results

From the collected data, the author conducts scale testing, exploratory factor analysis, and regression analysis to test the research hypothesis.

4. Research results

The author conducts Cronbach's Alpha test to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. The test results show that all 3 scales and 10 observed variables have reliability when meeting the standard conditions: Cronbach's alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 (Hai, D.H. et al., 2018) (Table 3).

Table 3. Scale test results

STT	Scales	Observed variables	Reliability coefficients (Cronbach' Alpha)	The correlation coefficient of the smallest total variable
1	Professional qualifications, expertise (PQ)	PQ1, PQ2, PQ3, PQ4	.772	PQ4 = .336
2	Work Capacity (WC)	WC1, WC2, WC3	.822	WC1 = .641
3	Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)	WR1, WR2, WR3	.698	WR3 = .454

Source: Author's survey results

With the standard test value, 3 scales and 10 observed variables in the model continue to be used to perform exploratory factor analysis. The author conducts exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation to preliminarily evaluate the unidirectionality, convergence value, and discriminant value of the scales. The results of the analysis are shown in Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4. Total Variance Explained

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.834
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2383.935
	df	45
	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	5.111	51.110	51.110	5.111	51.110	51.110	4.301	43.007	43.007
2	1.542	15.422	66.532	1.542	15.422	66.532	2.132	21.318	64.325
3	1.023	10.228	76.759	1.023	10.228	76.759	1.243	12.434	76.759
4	.861	8.607	85.366						
5	.419	4.192	89.558						
6	.394	3.941	93.499						
7	.299	2.990	96.488						
8	.242	2.416	98.904						
9	.061	.605	99.510						
10	.049	.490	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Source: Author's survey results

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
Professional qualifications, expertise (PQ)	PQ1	.916		
	PQ2	.802		
	PQ3	.821		

	PQ4	.676		
Work Capacity (WC)	WC1		.921	
	WC2		.881	
	WC3		.862	
Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)	WR1			.907
	WR2			.862
	WR3			.811
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

Source: Author's survey results

In quantitative research, exploratory factor analysis is performed in accordance with the data set through the following values: $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$; Bartlett's test has the Sig level of significance. < 0.05 ; Eigenvalue ≥ 1 ; Total Variance Explained $\geq 50\%$; Factor Loading ≥ 0.5 (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009).

Table 4 and Table 5 data show that: $KMO = 0.834 > 0.5$, confirms that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for the data set; Bartlett's test with Sig. = $0.000 < 0.05$, shows that the observed variables are linearly correlated with the representative factor; Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = $76.759\% > 50\%$ shows that 76.759% 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 03 initial factors with Eigenvalues > 1 , showing that the original research model was kept unchanged, including: 01 dependent variable (WR), 02 independent variables (PQ, WC) with a total of 10 observed variables having good statistical significance, it is possible to perform multivariable linear regression analysis to consider the relationship of independent variables (PQ, WC) with the dependent variable (WR).

Table 6. Multivariable regression results

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			

1	(Constant)	1.151	.114		10.06 1	.000	1.000
	Work Capacity (WC)	.038	.030	.040	1.235	.018	1.000
	Professional qualifications, expertise (PQ)	.727	.026	.894	27.69 7	.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)							
Adjusted R Square: 0.766							
Durbin-Watson: 2.135							

Source: Author's survey results

Table 6 data shows:

- Adjusted R Square = 0.766, confirms that the factors PQ, WC explain 76.6 % of the variation of the WR factor in the research model. The built multivariate regression model is suitable for the data set.

- The coefficient of variance exaggeration of the factors (VIF = 1,000 < 2), shows that the regression model does not have multicollinearity.

- Durbin-Watson = 2,135 (1 < d < 3), shows that the regression model does not have autocorrelation. The regression coefficients of the two independent variables (PQ, WC) are statistically significant (Sig. < 0.05), showing that the factors SC, SE are correlated with the WR.

- The unnormalized regression coefficients have positive values, so the factors in the research model have a positive relationship, the hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

On the basis of the generalized regression model $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_i * X_i$ (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009), a regression model can be identified the multivariate of this study is as follows:

$$WR = 1.151 + 0.38 * WC + 0.727 * PQ$$

Based on the standardized regression coefficient, it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variable in increasing order is: Work capacity (WC) and Professional qualifications, expertise (PQ).

5. Conclusion

From the above research results, it can be affirmed that: The practical capacity of commune-level civil servants is assessed by leaders at a lower level than that of commune-level civil servants professional qualifications, and training. It also means that commune-level civil servants need to improve their practical

working capacity to perform their duties better and serve the people better. Local leaders also need to take appropriate measures to more substantively assess the work results of commune-level civil servants. In fact, the current regulations of Vietnam's law on assessing the quality of civil servants (VG, 2020) have not set mandatory requirements for assessing the quality of civil servants according to the competency framework of each title, job position. Therefore, most local government agencies have not paid much attention to the development of the capacity framework and the assessment of civil servants according to the capacity framework. From the above conclusion, the author suggests the content of governance innovation for local leaders, that is: Building a competency framework and evaluating commune-level civil servants according to the competency framework of each job position. This is explained in two aspects below:

- Firstly, it helps to quantify the criteria for assessing the quality of civil servants according to the characteristics and professional standards of each title easily; help localities make the assessment of the quality of civil servants more accurately according to the characteristics and quality standards of civil servants of each industry and field, overcoming the limitations of assessing the quality of civil servants according to the quality standards general criteria are modeled in current legal documents.

- Secondly, contributing to the consistency in building the capacity framework and assessing the quality of civil servants according to the capacity framework of each job position of the commune-level government agencies. Besides, it also contributes to perfecting the civil service institution in building a capacity framework and assessing the quality of civil servants according to the competency framework of each job position in the public sector in Vietnam.

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