

# Assessing The Core Capacity, Working Practice Capacity Of Local Civil Servants In Vietnam

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## Abstract

In state agencies, civil servants enforce laws and policies according to their areas of expertise to manage social development. The issue of the quality of civil servants is often clearly defined by the laws of the countries, reflected in both their qualifications and their capacity. Many studies also mentioned and analyzed the quality (core competencies) and practical working capacity when assessing the quality of civil servants. In this study, on the basis of inheriting many previous studies and applying the issued legal regulations of Vietnam, the author surveys and evaluates the quality of local civil servants in Vietnam in two areas: Core competencies and practical working capacity of civil servants. The author builds a theoretical framework and directly surveys 270 leaders of communal government agencies in 3 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Thai Nguyen province (Northern region), Quang Ngai province (Central region), Tay Ninh province (Southern region). Research results show that local leaders underestimate the practical capacity of civil servants. From the conclusion of this study, the author suggests some contents that need to be researched and adjusted in Vietnam's local government policy on civil servant management.

Keywords: Civil servants; Quality of civil servants; Core capacity; Working practice capacity; Vietnam.

## 1. Research Introduction

Local civil servants in Vietnam are classified as officials at provincial level (63 provincial government agencies), district level (705 district government agencies), commune level (10.599 commune government agencies), in which the commune level is the most effective level of government, called the grassroots government (GSO, 2023). The direct implementation of the State's laws and policies and the direct handling of people's requests is mainly done at the commune-level government. Therefore, the quality of commune-level civil servants is an issue that directly affects the effectiveness of local social development management.

Vietnamese law stipulates the assessment of quality civil servants include 4 levels: Excellent completion of tasks; complete the task well; complete mission; failed to complete the mission (VG, 2020). According to the annual assessment, Vietnamese local civil servants have completed their tasks according to the prescribed standards of civil servant titles; the quality of civil servants is improved. However, at many local levels, the quality of civil servants still does not meet the requirements of businesses and people in the trend of integration and the development of digital technology; civil servants have not been able to promote their capacity (knowledge and skills) in practical implementation of assigned tasks (MOHA, 2022).

The above fact is a limitation and poses a challenge for leaders of government agencies in improving the quality of civil servants, maintaining effective governance of social development in the locality. To help solve this problem, conducting research on the quality of civil servants is essential. Therefore, the author conducted this study by surveying the opinions of 270 commune-level government leaders in three provinces representing three regions of Vietnam. Research conclusions on the quality of local civil servants are made from the collection and analysis of empirical information; provide more scientific information for local leaders to refer to in adjusting policies appropriately.

## **2. Research overview**

### **2.1. Quality of civil servants (QCS)**

The term "quality of civil servants" is mentioned in the field of research with the content showing the quality and capacity of civil servants. According to Trung, N.S. (2022), the quality of civil servants includes the quality, capacity and service of civil servants and is expressed through their work results. Khanh, C.X. et al. (2010) and Ha, T.T. et al. (2023) also established a similar research point of view, that is, the quality and capacity of civil servants meet the work requirements of state agencies. The content of the concept of "civil service quality" is explained by these studies in the following aspects: Qualifications, political awareness, expertise to meet the requirements of public service activities; knowledge, skills, and professional skills that are appropriate and meet the requirements of the job position of the civil servant; working consciousness, service attitude of civil servants. In state

management activities, Vietnamese law also stipulates the assessment of the quality of civil servants, including the content of quality and capacity; Public servants can demonstrate those qualities and capacities by performing their duties and providing services that meet the requirements of businesses and people (VNA, 2008; VG, 2020).

Both in the field of research, the field of management, the term “quality of civil servants” is defined to include the content related to the quality (core capacity), the capacity of civil servants (working practice capacity). In this study, the author inherits the above contents and explains the quality of civil servants, including:

- QCS1. Qualifications and awareness to meet the standards of civil servant titles. Civil servants have good political and legal awareness; knowledgeable about professional knowledge and relevant legal knowledge in public service activities and specialized fields. In state management activities, this content is a standard mandatory for all civil servants, which is regulated and uniformly applied by law.

- QCS2. Knowledge, skills and profession to meet the requirements of the job position of civil servants. Civil servants promote the knowledge, skills and professional skills trained and fostered to perform their assigned tasks and meet the requirements of the job positions that the public servant undertakes. In terms of specialized management, this content is a standard of professional nature for each industry and field and is regulated by the industry management agency.

- QCS3. Working spirit, service attitude to meet the requirements of people and businesses. Civil servants need to be proactive and ready to work to serve the civil service; devotedly serving businesses and people to ensure their legitimate rights and interests. In state management activities, this content is the standard of public service ethics of civil servants which is prescribed and uniformly applied by law.

The approach and content of the research on “civil servants quality” above mean what creates the value of civil servants. This is also a common content mentioned in the field of research when discussing the quality of subjects: “Quality is what creates the quality and value of a person, thing, or event” (Phe, H., 2011). In this case, the value of that civil servant is their quality (core capacity) and capacity (working practice capacity) demonstrated in the process of performing official duties.

## **2.2. Core capacity of civil servants (CCS)**

Many researchers emphasize the quality factor - the core competence of civil servants, which is the basic understanding and awareness of civil servants to meet the requirements of the standard of civil servant titles they undertake (Ha, T.T. et al., 2023). According to HUHA (2020) and Trung, N.S. et al. (2021), this quality includes: Politics, good ethics; understanding of public service

activities; the ability to work and the ability to self-study and be creative at work. These are also the contents expressed in the provisions of Vietnamese law on assessment of the quality of civil servants; the author inherits and generalizes it into the following specific contents.

- CCS1. Good Politics and morals. Civil servants strictly abide by the law and administrative discipline and discipline in their working agencies and units; Live an honest and humble lifestyle. They are personally responsible for the assigned work and report promptly on the results of the assigned tasks.

- CCS2. Knowledge of civil service activities. Civil servants have systematic knowledge on public service activities: Having systematic thinking on public service performance; compliance with the organization's assignment of duties; have the right attitude, democratic working style, right principles, respect for the common goals and common values of the organization.

- CCS3. Ability to work and ability to self-study and creative at work. Civil servants have the ability to work independently and work well together. This is the basic requirement to effectively carry out the assigned work. In addition, civil servants know how to actively learn, practice, update and supplement professional knowledge and skills to be proactive and creative in their work and respond appropriately to risks.

Civil servants are well aware of core competencies - necessary qualities, and they actively study, practice and make efforts in public service activities, which will be a factor that directly affects the quality of civil servants. The hypothesis about the core competencies of civil servants posed in this study is:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Core capacity of civil servants are factors that directly affect the quality of civil servants.

## **2.2. Working practice capacity of civil servants (PCS)**

The working practice capacity of civil servants has been mentioned and analyzed by many studies as a criterion for assessing the quality of civil servants, including the ability to effectively and efficiently perform assigned tasks. Thu, T.T. et al. (2013) affirmed that the practical working capacity of civil servants is the ability to work well thanks to ethical qualities and professional qualifications. Similarly, according to Hung, L.D. et al. (2023), the practical working capacity of civil servants is the ability to perform assigned tasks based on their qualities, knowledge and skills, and to meet the requirements of the position they undertake. These studies also explain the content of the concept of "The working practice capacity of civil servants" in the following aspects: Advisory capacity; capacity to organize and perform tasks; ability to test and evaluate. In state management activities, Vietnamese law also stipulates the practical working capacity of civil servants with the above contents, which is

the criterion for evaluating the quality of civil servants annually (VG, 2020). The author establishes a similar research point of view and is an award on the practical working capacity of civil servants according to the following contents.

- PCS1: Good advisory capacity. Public servants have a thinking approach to solving scientific problems; ability to analyze, evaluate, critique and realize ideas to meet the requirements of consulting work. Civil servants have the ability to actualize consulting ideas, direction and administration ideas into documents to ensure regulations for effective implementation in practice.

- PCS2: Good organizational capacity to perform tasks. Civil servants have the ability to identify and analyze scientific and timely work. They know how to determine the plan to implement the task in accordance with the resources, ensuring the feasibility when implementing the task. Since then, the implementation of professional tasks is guaranteed on schedule and with the quality assigned.

- PCS3: Good test and evaluation capacity. Civil servants have the ability to analyze and evaluate work to actively grasp the situation, promote advantages, and promptly overcome errors or unreasonable problems. They know how to summarize, learn from experience in time, adjust appropriate plans to always perform well the assigned tasks.

Civil servants have good practical working capacity, they will always meet the work requirements of the current civil service and adapt to the changes of society. This is a factor that directly affects the quality of civil servants. The hypothesis about the practical working capacity of civil servants set forth in this study is:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). The working practice capacity of civil servants is a factor that directly affects the quality of civil servants.

From the above overview, the author builds a research theoretical framework, a research model consisting of 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 9 observed variables when studying the influence of energy core capacity, the working practice capacity to the quality of civil servants. The author designed a survey with the above 9 observed variables. All observed variables are measured using a 5-level Likert measure: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No comments; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

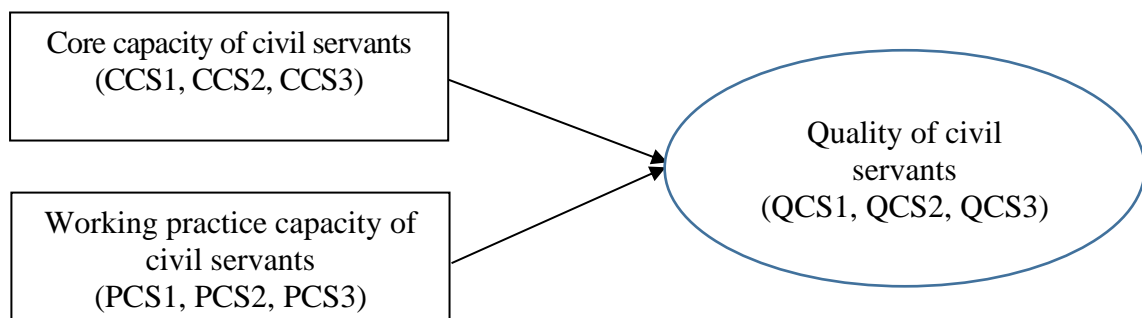
**Table 1. Research theoretical framework**

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	Core capacity of civil servants	CCS					
1	Good Politics and morals	CCS1					

2	Knowledge of civil service activities	CCS2						
3	Ability to work and ability to self-study and creative at work	CCS3						
<b>II</b>	<b>Working practice capacity of civil servants</b>	<b>PCS</b>						
1	Good advisory capacity	PCS1						
2	Good organizational capacity to perform tasks	PCS2						
3	Good test and evaluation capacity	PCS3						
<b>III</b>	<b>Quality of civil servants</b>	<b>QCS</b>						
1	Qualifications and awareness to meet the standards of civil servant titles	QCS1						
2	Knowledge, skills and profession to meet the requirements of the job position of civil servants	QCS2						
3	Working spirit, service attitude to meet the requirements of people and businesses	QCS3						

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

#### Research model



**Figure 1. Research model**

### 3. Research Methods

Assessing the quality of civil servants are different methods and measures used to evaluate civil servants according to defined contents. In the field of research, there are many evaluation methods mentioned and in fact, state agencies can also combine many evaluation methods to assess the quality of civil servants. Two commonly used methods of civil servant evaluation are the internal and external evaluations, which are commonly used together by Hai, T.N. (2008) and Khanh, C.X. et al. (2010) described and analyzed below.

- Method of internal evaluation: It is the self-assessment and internal assessment of their civil servants by agencies. The advantage of the internal assessment method is that it is easy to implement, takes less time and costs. The disadvantage of this method is that it is subjective, that is, if only making

internal evaluation, managers will only have one-way information, which will be incomplete to make appropriate management decisions.

- External evaluation method: It is the assessment of the agency's civil servants by an external individual or organization. This method is widely used in large-scale organizations and in the public sector of many countries around the world. The advantage of the external assessment method is that more objective assessment information is provided from outside individuals and organizations. However, the disadvantage of this assessment method is that it is time consuming and expensive to implement.

In this study, the author uses an internal assessment method through surveying the opinions of 270 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 3 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Thai Nguyen province (North region), Quang Ngai province (Central region), Tay Ninh province (Southern region). The survey was conducted in two steps: preliminary survey and official survey.

#### a) Preliminary survey

The research model was built including 3 scales, 9 observed variables; The minimum sample size required in quantitative research is  $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$  (Hai, D.H., 2019). In this study, the author carried out a survey with a sample size of  $N = 270 > 45$ , confirming the high reliability when conducting practical survey research. The preliminary survey was conducted in Thai Nguyen province with a sample size of  $N = 90$  leaders of commune-level government agencies. Preliminary survey results in Thai Nguyen province show that the observed variables are reliable enough to be used in the official survey on a broader scale.

#### b) Formal survey

The author conducted an official survey with 270 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 3 localities representing 3 regions of Vietnam, including: Thai Nguyen province (Northern region), Quang Ngai province (Central region), Tay Ninh (Southern region). The survey will be conducted in 2023. The survey results collected 270 votes and 270/270 valid votes; 78.2% of survey respondents are leaders of communal government agencies with 3 years or more of above management experience (Table 2).

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the study sample**

Age * Time Crosstabulation						
			Time			Total
			< 3 years	3-5 years	> 5 years	
Age	< 30	Count	38	0	0	38
		% Age	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	30-40	Count	21	136	0	157
		% Age	13.4%	86.6%	0.0%	100.0%

Total	>40	Count	0	0	75	75
		% Age	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Count	59	136	75	270
		% Age	21.9%	50.4%	27.8%	100.0%

Source: Author's survey results

With the collected data, the author conducts scale testing, regression analysis to test research hypotheses and draw research conclusions.

#### 4. Research results

Cronbach' Alpha test was performed to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hai, D.H. (2019), the scale ensures reliability when reaching the Cronbach' Alpha value > 0.6; The observed variable is reliable when it reaches the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value > 0.3 Statistical and testing results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable when meeting the above standard conditions (Table 3).

**Table 3. Scale test results**

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Core capacity of civil servants (PCC)	PCC1	270	2	5	4.01	.827	.819	PCC1 = .740
	PCC2	270	2	5	3.96	.794		PCC2 = .739
	PCC3	270	2	5	4.00	.827		PCC3 = .730
2. Working practice capacity of civil servants (PCS)	PCS1	270	1	5	3.72	.632	.679	PCS1 = .377
	PCS2	270	1	5	3.69	1.059		PCS2 = .579
	PCS3	270	1	5	3.63	1.011		PCS3 = .479
3. Quality of civil servants (QCS)	QCS1	270	2	5	3.91	.621	.807	QCS1 = .835
	QCS2	270	2	5	3.90	.796		QCS2 = .636
	QCS3	270	2	5	3.87	.730		QCS3 = .668
Valid N (listwise)		280						

Source: Author's survey results

Table 3 data shows:

+ Observations on the scale "Core capacity of civil servants" (PCC), "Working practice capacity of civil servants" (PCS), "Quality of civil servants" (QCS) are all evaluated at Mean > 3.5, statistically significant according to the measure Likert (1-5) identified. Particularly, the scale "Working practice capacity of civil servants" (PCS) has low-rated observed variables: Mean (PCS1) = 3.72, Mean (PCS2) = 3.69, Mean (PCS3) = 3.63, shows that the practical working



capacity of civil servants is limited and has not met the high requirements in all 3 aspects: Advisory capacity; capacity to organize and perform tasks and capacity to inspect and evaluate.

+ All 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the model have standardized test values: Cronbach' Alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. All these scales are eligible to perform regression analysis. The regression analysis aims to examine the relationship of the independent variables "Core capacity of civil servants" (PCC), "Working practice capacity of civil servants" (PCS) with the dependent variable "Quality of civil servants" (QCS). The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Multivariable regression results**

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.659	.170		9.787	.013		
Core capacity of civil servants (PCC)	.608	.039	.744	15.760	.002	.809	1.235
Working practice capacity of civil servants (PCS)	.054	.043	.059	1.256	.000	.809	1.235
a. Dependent Variable: Quality of civil servants (QCS) R Square: 0.518; Durbin-Watson: 2.250							

Source: Author's survey results

Table 4 data shows:

+ R Square = 0.518, confirming the factors "Core capacity of civil servants" (PCC), "Working practice capacity of civil servants" (PCS) explain 51.8% of the variation of the factor "Quality of civil servants" (QCS) in the research model; the built multivariate regression model is suitable for the data set.

+ VIF = 1.235 ( $1 < VIF < 2$ ), Durbin-Watson = 2.250 ( $1 < d < 3$ ) shows that the regression model has no multicollinearity, no autocorrelation.

+ Regression coefficients of 2 independent variables "Core capacity of civil servants" (PCC), "Working practice capacity of civil servants" (PCS) have positive values ( $B > 0$ ), significance Statistical statistics ( $Sig. < 0.05$ ), show that the factors "Core capacity of civil servants" (PCC), "Working practice capacity of civil servants" (PCS) are positively correlated with the factor "Quality of civil servants" (QCS); hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

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, DH, 2019), the multivariate regression model of this study can be determined as follows: after:

$$QCS = 1.659 + 0.608 \cdot PCC + 0.054 \cdot PCS$$

Based on the unnormalized regression coefficient (B), it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent and dependent variables in increasing order is: "Working practice capacity of civil servants" (PCS) and "Core capacity of civil servants" (PCC).

## 5. Conclusion

From the above research results, it can be affirmed that the capacity of civil servants, the quality of civil servants is assessed as satisfactory according to the standards of civil servants' titles. However, local leaders underestimate the practical working capacity of civil servants. That shows that the knowledge and skills that civil servants are trained and fostered have not been promoted much in practice. Therefore, the renovation of the assessment of civil servants' capacity and the quality of civil servants should be studied and adjusted so that civil servants can promote their capacity and forte in the process of performing their official duties.

Stemming from the above practice, the author recommends for local leaders to innovate content to assess capacity and assess the quality of civil servants, that is: Assess civil servants according to the competency framework of each position employment, replacing the measure of assessment according to the standards of civil servants' titles. This issue is explained in terms of content and meaning as follows:

- Firstly, the majority of localities are carrying out the annual quality assessment of civil servants according to the standards of civil servant titles. This content is implemented in accordance with the law of Vietnam. However, the Vietnamese law also suggests that the assessment of civil servants should be in a form suitable to the characteristics of the industry and locality, so it is feasible to innovate the way of evaluating civil servants: competency framework of each job position.

- Second, the assessment of civil servants according to the competency framework of each job position will help quantify the criteria for assessing the quality of civil servants according to job characteristics and employment positions of civil servants easily. ; create a consensus on the form and content of capacity assessment and assessment of the quality of civil servants of local government agencies.

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