

## Qualifications, Capacity Of Vietnamese Commune-Level Civil Servants

Kieu Quynh Anh<sup>1\*</sup>, Kieu Tuan Anh<sup>2</sup>,  
Le Son Tung<sup>3</sup>, Tran Thu Ha<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Vietnam Social Sciences Review, Hanoi city, Vietnam

\* Corresponding author, Email: anhkieuquynh72@gmail.com;

<sup>2</sup>Electric Power University, Hanoi city, Vietnam;

Email: anhkt@epu.edu.vn

<sup>3</sup>Hanoi University of Home Affairs, Hanoi city, Vietnam;

Email: lesontungdhnv@gmail.com;

<sup>4</sup>Hanoi University of Home Affairs, Hanoi city, Vietnam;

Email: thuhatrاندhnv@gmail.com

### Abstract

In Vietnam, local government consists of three levels: provincial, district, and commune-level. The commune-level government is the lowest level, acting as an apparatus that directly implements 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. However, the process of performing the duties of commune-level civil servants is affected by many factors, affecting their work results and managers need to pay attention to take appropriate measures to promote their forte of civil servants. This study mentions two main factors affecting the work results of commune-level civil servants: qualifications and working capacity of civil servants. The author conducted a survey of 250 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam: Bac Ninh province (North region), Ha Tinh province (Central region), Bac Lieu province (Southern region). Research results show that local leaders rate civil servants as meeting the requirements on qualifications and competence according to title standards, but underestimate the practical capacity of commune-level civil servants. From the results of this study, the author suggests appropriate policy issues for localities to promote the

capacity of commune-level civil servants to serve the civil service.

Keywords: Commune-level civil servants; Professional qualification; Work capacity; Work result.

## **1. Introduction**

The commune level of Vietnam consists of 10,599 government agencies (GSO, 2022). Each government agency is staffed with 6 civil servant titles to perform state management tasks according to groups of fields within the locality, such as: Justice, civil status, culture, society, finance, military affairs, resources, environment... (VNA, 2015; MOHA, 2019).

In local government agencies, civil servants are evaluated annually with 4 levels according to the law: Excellent completion of tasks; Complete the task well; Complete mission; did not complete the mission (VG, 2020). The evaluation is mainly carried out according to the internal assessment method, associated with the standards of civil servant titles and the criteria prescribed by law. Therefore, the vast majority of civil servants are often assessed to have completed and completed their assigned tasks well; Qualifications standards and competency standards by title are guaranteed, meeting the requirements of the civil servant rank (MOHA, 2020).

Although civil servants are assessed to meet the general requirements, the research issue of concern is: At the local level, the actual working capacity of civil servants has not been assessed commensurate with the level of training while these are the two most basic criteria to evaluate the quality of civil servants. In that context, this study was conducted with the goal of providing scientific information for management and policy making on commune-level civil servants. The author conducted a survey of 250 leaders of commune-level government agencies in 3 provinces representing 3 regions of Vietnam to assess the impact of the factors “Professional qualification” and “Work capacity” to “Work results” of commune-level civil servants.

## **2. Research overview**

### **2.1. Professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants (PQ)**

Professional qualifications of civil servants are the knowledge and skills that each individual is trained before being recruited as a civil servant and continues to be trained to meet the requirements of performing official duties. In the field of research, many researchers assert that professional qualifications are the foundation of work capacity and a criterion for assessing the quality of civil servants (Trung, N.S. et al., 2021). In terms of management, Vietnam's law also stipulates the criterion of "professional qualifications" when assessing the quality of civil servants (VNA, 2008; VG, 2020). On the basis of inheriting the research results and regulations of the law mentioned above, the author builds a scale of professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants, including:

- PQ1. Professional qualifications meet standards according to the standards of civil servant titles. Commune-level civil servants have professional qualifications according to the prescribed title standards; Thorough understanding of specialized knowledge and legal knowledge in the specialized field of work.

- PQ2. Knowledge, skills to perform standard duties according to the requirements of the job position. Commune-level civil servants have systematic knowledge of public service activities; administrative skills necessary to organize the implementation of professional tasks in public service activities associated with the position they hold.

- PQ3. Knowledge of foreign languages and informatics meets standards for civil servant titles. Commune-level civil servants have the knowledge, skills in computer science and foreign languages according to the prescribed title standards and the ability to use them to effectively perform professional tasks in public service activities associated with the job position which they undertake.

Professional qualifications, in addition to ensuring standards in terms of form (the degree, certificates), must also be expressed in terms of content (work practices). That puts a requirement on the practical ability and training of commune-level civil servants to transform knowledge and skills into products and professional work results. This is a factor that greatly affects the work results of commune-level civil servants.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Professional qualifications, promoted in practice, will be a factor that has a great influence on the work results of commune-level civil servants.

## **2.2. Work capacity of commune-level civil servants (WC)**

In the field of research, the term “capacity” is defined as “the ability to effectively and efficiently perform assigned tasks” (Trung, N.S., 2022). In the field of management, the law of Vietnam clearly stipulates the working capacity criteria of civil servants according to the standards of titles and employment positions, that is, the ability to advise, the ability to organize and implement tasks, ability to check and evaluate work (VNA, 2008; VG, 2020). According to these approaches, the author summarizes the working capacity of commune-level civil servants with the following contents.

- WC1. Good advisory capacity. Commune-level civil servants are capable of researching and synthesizing to advise on law-making and policy-making in their professional fields ; planning ability, good writing ability to realize consulting ideas in professional activities.

- WC2. Good organizational capacity to perform tasks. Commune-level civil servants have the ability to identify, analyze and forecast professional work in a scientific and timely manner; ability to develop a plan to execute tasks in a reasonable and feasible manner.

- WC3. Good inspection and evaluation capacity: Commune-level civil servants have the ability to actively control work; ability to summarize, learn from experience in time and adjust appropriate plans to always perform well assigned tasks.

With their working capacity, commune-level civil servants transform their knowledge and skills according to their trained professional qualifications to become professional work products in practice. This is an important content, a factor that directly affects and greatly affects the working results of commune-level civil servants.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Working capacity is a factor that directly and greatly affects the work results of commune-level civil servants.

## **2.3. Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)**

The term “work results” has been explained by many studies with the meaning of output products of the working process, but is a basic and important criterion for evaluating the quality of civil servants; Work results are reflected in the quality and progress of the assigned tasks (Trung, N.S. et al., 2021). Vietnamese law also stipulates that work results are an assessment of the quality of civil servants; work results are shown in three aspects: Ensure work progress; ensure the quality of work performance; serve and create satisfaction of businesses and people (VG, 2020). On the basis of inheriting the above research results and regulations of the law, the author builds a scale of work results of commune-level civil servants, including:

- WR1. Ensure work progress. Commune-level civil servants perform assigned tasks to ensure progress according to the plan; the results of processing the enterprise’s dossier, the people ensure the time and the appointment letter.

- WR2. Ensure quality of work done. Commune-level civil servants perform their assigned tasks to ensure quality according to the plan; the results of handling dossiers of enterprises and people ensure the correct content and administrative procedures as prescribed.

- WR3. Serving and creating satisfaction of businesses and people. Commune-level civil servants respect businesses and people; serve and make businesses and citizens satisfied when solving their requirements.

On the basis of the content of the review, the author builds a research theoretical framework, the research model includes: 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 9 observed variables when studying the influence of professional qualifications and working capacity to the work results of commune-level civil servants. All observed variables are measured by 5-level Likert measure when designing into questions in the survey: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No comments; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

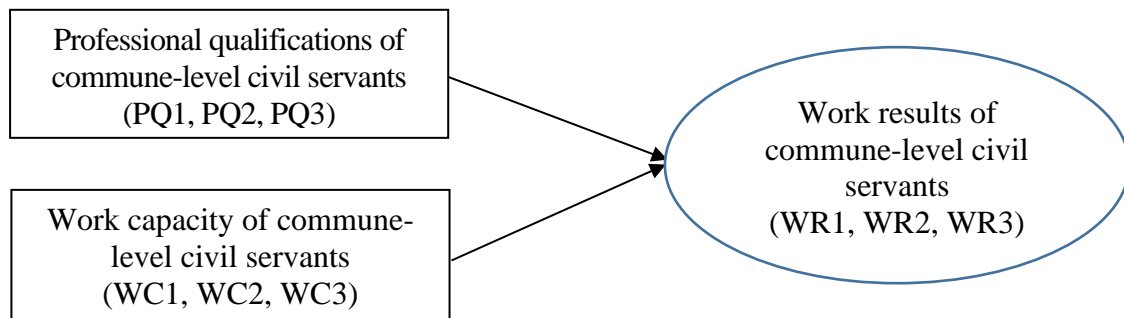
**Table 1.** Research theoretical framework

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels					
			1	2	3	4	5	

<b>I</b>	<b>Professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants</b>	<b>PQ</b>						
1	Professional qualifications meet standards according to the standards of civil servant titles	PQ1						
2	Knowledge, skills to perform standard duties according to the requirements of the job position	PQ2						
3	Knowledge of foreign languages and informatics meets standards for civil servant titles	PQ3						
<b>II</b>	<b>Work capacity of commune-level civil servants</b>	<b>WC</b>						
1	Good advisory capacity	WC1						
2	Good organizational capacity to perform tasks	WC2						
3	Good inspection and evaluation capacity	WC3						
<b>III</b>	<b>Work results of commune-level civil servants</b>	<b>WR</b>						
1	Ensure work progress	WR1						
2	Ensure quality of work done	WR2						
3	Serving and creating satisfaction of businesses and people	WR3						

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

#### Research model



**Figure 1. Research model**

### 3. Research methods

In this study, the author used qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research is carried out through the collection and analysis of secondary data - published documents. Quantitative research is carried out through the collection and analysis of primary data in the form of surveys. The survey is carried out in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

a) Preliminary survey

In this study, the research model consists of 3 scales and 9 observed variables, the minimum sample size needed in quantitative research is  $N = 9 * 5 = 45$  (Hai, D.H., 2019). In fact, the author performed with sample size  $N = 250 > 45$ , showing high reliability when conducting survey research. Initially, 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 in Bac Ninh province show that the observed variables are reliable enough to be used in the official survey on a broader scale.

#### b) Formal survey

Since the minimum sample size  $N = 45$  was determined initially, the author carried out the actual survey with sample size  $N = 250$  ( $N > 45$ ) showing high reliability when carrying out survey research. The author conducted an official survey in Bac Ninh Province (Northern region), Ha Tinh Province (Central region), Bac Lieu Province (Southern region). The survey was conducted in 2023 and the survey results collected 250 votes and 250/250 valid votes; the majority of survey respondents (60%) are leaders of commune-level government agencies with 3 years or more of above management experience (Table 2).

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

Age * Time * Gender Crosstabulation						
Count						
Gender			Time			Total
			< 3 years	3-5 years	> 5 years	
Male	Age	< 30	0	0	3	3
		30-40	14	17	20	51
		>40	50	27	12	89
	Total	64	44	35	143	
Female	Age	< 30	0	0	5	5
		30-40	10	10	35	55
		>40	26	9	12	47
	Total	36	19	52	107	
Total	Age	< 30	0	0	8	8
		30-40	24	27	55	106
		>40	76	36	24	136
	Total	100	63	87	250	

Source: Author's survey results

With the collected data, the author conducts scale test, regression analysis to test the research hypothesis.

#### 4. Research results

The author conducts statistics and tests Cronbach' Alpha 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 have reliability when meeting the standard conditions: Cronbach' Alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 (Hair, J.F. et al, 2009) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Statistical results, scale testing

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants (PQ)	PQ1	250	2	5	4.04	.455	.804	PQ1 = .603
	PQ2	250	2	5	4.27	.489		PQ2 = .648
	PQ3	250	2	5	4.16	.458		PQ3 = .707
2. Work capacity of commune-level civil servants (WC)	WC1	250	1	5	3.42	.975	.604	WC1 = .431
	WC2	250	1	5	3.59	.832		WC2 = .544
	WC3	250	1	5	3.51	.902		WC3 = .474
3. Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)	WR1	250	1	5	4.03	.620	.799	WR1 = .672
	WR2	250	2	5	3.93	.590		WR2 = .607
	WR3	250	2	5	4.16	.500		WR3 = .586
Valid N (listwise)		250						

Source: Author's survey results

Table 3 data shows:

+ The observations on the scale of professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants (PQ), "Work capacity of commune-level civil servants" (WC), "Work results of commune-level civil servants" (WR) are all was assessed at mean Mean > 3.5, statistically significant according to the Likert measure (1-5) identified. Particularly, the scale "Working capacity of commune-level civil servants" (NL) has observed variables rated at the lowest level: Mean (NL1) = 3.42, Mean (NL2) = 3.59, Mean (NL3) = 3.51 , shows that the working capacity of civil servants in practice is still limited, not meeting the high requirements in terms of



advisory capacity, task performance capacity and inspection and evaluation capacity.

+ All 3 scales and 9 observed variables in the model have standardized test values: Cronbach' Alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 (Hair, J.F. et al, 2009). These scales continue to be used to perform regression analysis to examine the relationship of the independent variables "Professional qualification of commune-level civil servants" (PQ), "Work capacity of civil servants commune level" (WC) with the dependent variable "Work results of commune-level civil servants" (WR). The results of multivariate regression analysis are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Multivariable regression results

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.010	.257		3.923	.000		
	Professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants (PQ)	.642	.068	.534	9.428	.000	.804	1.243
	Work capacity of commune-level civil servants (WC)	.103	.046	.128	2.262	.008	.804	1.243

a. Dependent Variable: Work results of commune-level civil servants (WR)  
R Square: 0.561; Durbin-Watson: 2.071

Source: Author's survey results

Table 4 data shows:

+ R Square = 0.561, confirming that the factors "Professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants" (PQ), "Work capacity of commune-level civil servants" (WC) explain 56.1% of the variation of employees factor "Work results of commune-level civil servants" (WR) in the research model; The built multivariate regression model is suitable for the data set.

+ VIF = 1.243 ( $1 < VIF < 2$ ), Durbin-Watson = 2.071 ( $1 < d < 3$ ), showing that the regression model has no multicollinearity, no autocorrelation.

+ Regression coefficients of two independent variables “Professional qualification of commune-level civil servants” (PQ), “Work capacity of commune-level civil servants” (WC) have positive values and are statistically significant. (Sig. < 0.05), shows that the factors “Professional qualification of commune-level civil servants” (PQ), “Work capacity of commune-level civil servants” (WC) have a positive relationship with “Work results of commune-level civil servants” (WC); Hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted.

On the basis of the generalized regression model  $Y = B_0 + B_1 * X_1 + B_2 * X_2 + \dots + B_i * X_i$  (Hai, D.H., 2019), a multivariate regression model of this study is as follows:

$$WR = 1.010 + 0.642 * PQ + 0.103 * WC$$

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: “Work capacity of commune-level civil servants” (WC) and “Professional qualifications of commune-level civil servants” (PQ).

## 5. Conclusion

From the above research results, it can be confirmed that local leaders underestimate the practical working capacity of commune-level civil servants, that: Commune-level civil servants have not yet promoted the knowledge and skills that have been developed training in practical implementation of professional tasks. They 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 capacity of commune-level civil servants to perform their duties. Therefore, the author recommends that local leaders need to innovate the assessment of the working capacity of civil servants; focus on assessing the competency framework of each job position. That is because:

- Firstly, the current Vietnamese law regulating the assessment of the quality of civil servants (VG, 2020) does not set mandatory requirements for the assessment of the quality of civil servants according to the competency framework of each title, job position. From the above practice, it is necessary for local government agencies to renew the assessment of the

working capacity of commune-level civil servants according to the competency framework of each job position.

- Second, assessing the working capacity of commune-level 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 the characteristics and professional standards of each position list easily; the assessment of the quality of civil servants will be more accurate.

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