

THE ISSUE OF DEVELOPING VIETNAMESE TALENTED CIVIL SERVANT IN THE TREND OF REVOLUTION 4.0

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Abstract

In the trend of the fourth industrial revolution (revolution 4.0), organizations are changing their mindset and working methods to effectively use resources based on the application of new technologies. The employees are now required to have higher capacity and adaptability to social change. For public agencies, this is a concerning issue and a turning point, posing a requirement for developing talented civil servants to build up e-governments and digital governments as well as serve the citizens better. So far, the issue of developing talented civil servants in Vietnam has been addressed in the Law on Cadres and Civil Servants (2019). However, this is a new issue which has not been specifically institutionalized for synchronous implementation in the civil service system because of different influencing factors including political, legal factors and social change trends. The talented civil servant development in the context of the fourth industrial revolution with current social changes is mainly discussed about in this paper. By collecting and analyzing secondary data according to the qualitative method, the study presents a theoretical research on talented civil servants (characteristics of talented civil servants, requirements of the 4.0 revolution for talented civil servants) and discusses policies on talented civil servant development in Vietnam in the 4.0 revolutionary trend.

Key words: talented civil servants; development; revolution 4.0; Vietnam.

1. Introduction

Vietnamese civil servants are defined by law as Vietnamese citizens, recruited and appointed to ranks, positions, and titles corresponding to job positions in state agencies, political organizations, and socio-political organizations and other specific institutions (in Vietnam's political system). They are on the payroll and receive salaries from the state budget (VNA, 2008). They perform public duties and belong to a large system of 4-level state agencies and organizations: central level, provincial level (63 units), district level (705 units) and commune level (10.599 units) [GSO, 2023].

Standards for civil servants are determined to include general standards (nationality, politics, qualifications) and specific standards for each field (professional knowledge and skills). The total approved payroll for the entire political system in the 2022-2026 period is 2.234.720 (CPV, 2022). In fact, the 4.0 revolution requires more from Vietnamese civil servants in terms of knowledge and skills; meanwhile, the proportion of elderly civil servants (over 45 years old) whose limited abilities to adapt to new things are not small. Therefore, developing talented young civil servants to build a team of high-qualified civil servants serving the civil service is an urgent issue.

Responding to requirements of the 4.0 revolution and other social change trends, Vietnamese managers have put much emphasis on talented civil servant development for the civil service. The 2008 Law on Cadres and Civil Servants, amended and supplemented in 2019, defines: "The head of the agency with authority to recruit civil servants decides on recruitment policies, professional performance standards and the merit for talented civil servants in public units under their management. The Provincial People's Council regulates policies to talent acquisition to serve public duties in agencies, organizations, and units managed by the province" (VNA, 2019). However, the issues on developing talented civil servants which are still not specifically stated by law need to be studied and institutionalized in a more practical way to facilitate synchronous implementation in the civil service system. Therefore, the research on talented civil servants and discussion of policy issues are of interest to this study.

2. Talented civil servant

Talent is referred to, by many researchers, individual's outstanding capacity in each specific field and an individual can not be talented in all fields. According to Tham, H.B. (2006), talented people demonstrate their outstanding capacities and creative completion of certain activities; therefore, talented civil servants are defined as people with excellent capacities to perform and achieve work results. In the same viewpoint, Nam, N.V. and Ngan, V.H. (2011) emphasizes that talented civil servants are people who have masterful performance in their professional field and are widely regarded as the talents of the organization and the country. These research perspectives tend to focus on working results achieved by civil servants and their creative completion of assigned tasks. In other words, a civil servant is considered a talented one when his or her outstanding capacity is confirmed based on their working performance and the achieved results.

In the light of earlier researches, Trung, N.S. et al. (2021) affirms that talented civil servants not only have outstanding capacity to meet high requirements of current assigned tasks, but also their capacity to serve the public service better in the future. This means it is impossible to completely confirm civil servants' future talent basing on their performance and achievements in the past or at present. Hence, state managers need to pay attention to assessing whether civil servants' talent development trend is consistent with the organization's development goals or not. It is believed that this research approach and perspective is more comprehensive and suitable in the modern social context with the increasingly clear and demanding specialization of each field. At the same time, the professional activities and capabilities of civil servants are affected by new trends of social changes, so talented civil servants must adapt and maintain their outstanding capabilities to meet the requirements of public service activities.

In spite of different research approaches and perspectives, it can be seen that researchers are all in agreement on talented civil servants' outstanding capacities in their professional field and achieved working results. This paper supports the aforementioned discussions on talented civil servants, and emphasizes civil servants' outstanding capacity to meet public service requirements at present and in the future and their adaption to social changes.

In terms of traditional public service activities, civil servants perform their assigned tasks and interact with citizens through direct contacts at the agency's headquarters. In that way, their outstanding capacity is demonstrated in performing the given tasks effectively in the sequence of time, workload and achieved results. However, in the 4.0 revolutionary trend, the interaction of civil servants with citizens is changing and requesting documents, resolving processes and result announcements are carried out in a digital environment. Thus, it is crucial for civil servants to master proficient digital knowledge and skills to capture information and citizens' needs in time and regularly. Additionally, they also need to effectively interact with citizens through technology applications (Tung, L.S., 2022). In a similar view, Hang, V.T.M. (2023) emphasizes public service activities in the context of the 4.0 revolution in which civil servants have proficient digital knowledge and skills to work and interact in the digital environment, then they will be the subjects implementing digital transformation in public service activities and developing e-government and digital government (advising and organizing the implementation of assigned tasks in the digital environment; inspecting, supervising, being accountable to their responsibilities and results of implementing assigned tasks; communicating with citizens in the digital environment). Thus, citizens' comments and suggestions to policy development will be transmitted promptly. Moreover, practical social needs are synthesized and researched to meet the requirements of national and local social development policy planning.

Thus, in the 4.0 revolutionary trend, talented civil servants, in addition to outstanding professional capacity and high level of competence, must be equipped with basic, proactive, regularly - updated digital knowledge and skills to successfully complete assigned tasks in the digital environment. Thanks to this, their outstanding capacity continues to be promoted and adapted to the development of new technologies applied to public service activities in the 4.0 revolutionary trend.

In other words, with the rapid development of digital technology, civil servants who are talented in their professional fields but not proficient in digital knowledge and skills will find it difficult to promote the outstanding capacities they already have.

3. Discussions on talented civil servant development in Vietnam

The talented civil servant development, which is stated in Vietnamese Law on Cadres and Civil Servants, has been oriented and decentralized to central and local agencies to decide on meritocracy and remuneration for talented civil servants (VNA, 2019). However, this is a new issue which has not been specifically institutionalized and consistent with the 4.0 revolution trend for synchronous implementation in the civil service system. Hence, in this paper, the discussions on talented civil servant development policy in the context of the fourth industrial revolution with current social changes is mainly concerned about.

In fact, the 4.0 revolution poses new requirements on civil servants, especially the need for proficient digital knowledge and skills to work and interact in the digital environment. Even talented civil servants, themselves, also need to be proficient in digital knowledge and skills to promote their outstanding capacities in professional activities. This is a new thing, breaking traditional concepts and traditional management methods which are now changing towards to the advanced development of digital technology. Therefore, it is necessary to research and adjust policies on talented civil servants according to standards of outstanding professional capacities combined with proficient digital knowledge and skills. When implemented, these policies will help civil servants improve digital knowledge and skills so that they can both develop excellent competences and high-level capabilities in carrying out public duties and well perform their advisory tasks as well as work schedule in the context of digital society. Some issues discussed on policies to develop talented civil servants are: building up criteria for outstanding capacities and promoting the outstanding capacities for talented civil servants; developing standards on digital skills proficiency for talented civil servants and training digital knowledge and skills for civil servants to provide better public service in the digital environment.

- Firstly, building up criteria for outstanding capacities and promoting the outstanding capacities for talented civil servants:

From approaches and perspectives of different researchers, outstanding capacity criteria for talented civil servants are developed and can be quantified as follows:

(1) Civil servants have in-depth knowledge of their professional fields, creative thinking and innovative spirit, ability to absorb new knowledge combined with promoting the nation's elite knowledge and adapt to the new technology development trend of the 4.0 revolution (proficient digital knowledge and skills to work and interact effectively in the digital environment).

(2) Civil servants are able to work independently, coordinate effectively with colleagues in performing public duties, and be active, creative to complete assigned tasks.

Their working results and achievements in performing tasks have a positive impact on the development of the industry, field, locality and country.

(3) Civil servants have research capacity to serve as consultants and policy makers in their fields of work; well organize and implement tasks and develop scientific working methods to be active, creative and convenient to achieve high - qualified working results.

To promote the outstanding capacities of talented civil servants, it is necessary to create favorable conditions for them to actively participate and demonstrate their competences. Specifically:

(1) Civil servants are allowed to attend and discuss in the meetings relating to the managers' professional activities at work; equipped with modern working facilities to effectively carry out assigned tasks.

(2) Civil servants have convenient access to important documents, policies and strategies to serve scientific research and professional activities; actively propose and protect initiatives in advising on important strategies and policies of their state agencies, sectors, localities and country.

(3) Civil servants are given priority in allocating special resources to serve scientific research and professional activities while performing specific tasks, even out of working hours.

(4) Civil servants are empowered to assign work to others in assisting positions to carry out assigned tasks towards achieving the overall results of the agency¹.

- Secondly, developing standards on digital skills proficiency for talented civil servants and training digital knowledge and skills for civil servants to provide better public service in the digital environment

That standards for proficiency in digital skills are built together with standards for outstanding professional capacities when the recruitment of talented civil servants is carried out is a necessary criterion, which could promote their competences as well as enable them to adapt to the new development trend of digital technology and digital society. For individuals who are subjects to the talented civil servant policies, the digital and technology training will provide them with the necessary digital knowledge and skills to promote their outstanding capacities.

¹ Vietnamese law defines civil servants' job positions including: (1) Leadership and management positions; (2) specialized professional job positions; (3) shared professional positions (finance, planning and investment, inspection, legality, international cooperation, personnel management, emulation and reward, clerical work and some other specific job positions); (4) supporting and serving job positions (VG, 2020).

In fact, many public agencies in Vietnam have been implementing policies towards talented civil servants in the direction of setting up standards of outstanding capacities and appropriate remuneration. However, digital knowledge and skills are new issues which have not fully expressed in many public agencies' policies. The revolution 4.0 are changing management methods and e-government becomes popular. Digital skills are both an important element and a high requirement for civil servants. This poses requirements on civil servants for digital knowledge, skills and regular updates so that they can truly master their professional activities in the digital environment. Even for those who are identified as talented civil servants, in addition to their outstanding professional capacities, standards for being proficient in digital skills to well perform professional tasks in the digital environment should be an urgent issue addressed in policies on talented civil servant development.

In this study, by analyzing the characteristics of talented civil servants and requirements of the 4.0 revolution for talented civil servants, policies on talented civil servants are deeply discussed so that the civil servants can both promote their outstanding professional capacities and adapt to the development trends of digital technology and digital society. The policy discussions focus on building outstanding capacity criteria and promoting outstanding capacities for talented civil servants, developing standards on digital skills proficiency and training implementations of digital knowledge and skills for civil servants to well perform their duties in the digital environment. The study results are meaningful to fulfill the research objectives, at the same time, provide useful information for managers to synthesize and research to develop talented civil servant policies in Vietnam in the trend of revolution 4.0.

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