

Strengthening the capacity of civil servants in policy formulation and implementation for innovation in Vietnam

Dr. Do Thi Vui

Academy of Public Administration and Governance

Abstract: *In the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 unfolding at an unprecedented pace, innovation has increasingly become essential for governments worldwide to respond to rapidly evolving and complex socio-economic challenges effectively. Within this process, cadres and civil servants play a pivotal role in formulating and implementing policies that promote innovation in both the public sector and broader society. This paper examines the role of cadres and civil servants in the development and implementation of innovation policies in Vietnam. It also assesses the current situation and proposes several solutions to enhance this workforce's capacity, thereby contributing to sustainable development in the era of digital transformation and international integration.*

Keywords: *Innovation; cadres and civil servants; Industrial Revolution 4.0; innovation policy.*

1. Introduction

In recent years, the concept of innovation has become increasingly prevalent in Vietnam, reflecting a trend of selectively adopting and applying international experiences to suit domestic conditions. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009), innovation is defined as “the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (goods or service), a new production process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace

organization, or external relations.” In Vietnam, this concept has also been institutionalized in the amended Law on Science and Technology (2018), which defines innovation as “the creation and application of scientific, technical, and technological achievements or management solutions to enhance socio-economic development efficiency, productivity, quality, and the added value of products and goods” (National Assembly, 2018).

In the context of the knowledge-based economy and the Industrial Revolution 4.0, innovation is a key

Received:

April 02, 2025

Revised:

May 08, 2025

Accepted:

June 20, 2025

[https://doi.org/](https://doi.org/10.59394/JSM.67)

10.59394/JSM.67

driver of sustainable economic growth, enhanced labor productivity, and national competitiveness. For transitional economies such as Vietnam, developing and implementing innovation policies is not only an urgent task but also a long-term strategy aimed at realizing national development goals. Within this policy process, the contingent of cadres and civil servants plays a central role, both as policy advisors and proposers and as actors directly responsible for organizing, coordinating, and monitoring the actual implementation of policies. Therefore, identifying the role of cadres and civil servants throughout the entire policy cycle is essential to ensure the feasibility and effectiveness of innovation policies from the design phase. At the same time, it contributes to fostering public cadres' proactive and creative roles in executing innovation policies, thereby promoting the country's sustainable socio-economic development.

2. The role of cadres and civil servants in the formulation and implementation of innovation policies

2.1. In the formulation of innovation policies

Policy formulation is the process of researching, developing, and issuing decisions to address practical issues arising during socio-economic development. In innovation, cadres and civil servants play a pivotal role from the beginning of the policy design stage, acting as advisors, proposers, and shapers of strategic orientations.

According to Hai (2019), the quality of policy advisory work largely depends on the civil service workforce's analytical capacity, systems thinking, and long-term forecasting abilities. In digital transformation and the rapid advancement of emerging technologies, cadres and civil servants are responsible for

studying domestic and international scientific and technological landscapes and identifying major technological trends such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, renewable energy, and digital business models. Simultaneously, they must conduct practical surveys to grasp the needs, challenges, and expectations of key stakeholders, including enterprises, research institutes, universities, and the startup community.

Based on the collected data, cadres and civil servants analyze the information, consult international best practices, and synthesize feedback from relevant stakeholders to develop feasible policy options. In addition, conducting a policy impact assessment before promulgation is a crucial step that anticipates potential outcomes and risks across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the cadres and civil servants can propose optimal solutions tailored to Vietnam's development context, thereby ensuring the feasibility and effectiveness of policy implementation.

2.2. In the implementation of innovation policies

Based on the legal framework and directives issued by central authorities, such as laws, decrees, and government decisions related to innovation, cadres and civil servants at ministries, agencies, and localities are responsible for translating policies into practical implementation guidelines. These documents specify objectives, support criteria, incentive mechanisms, conditions for access, and procedures for carrying out innovation programs and projects. According to Hai (2020), translating policy into operational tools is a critical intermediary link, ensuring that policies are effectively implemented and responsive to real-world needs.

In addition, cadres and civil servants are directly involved in implementing specific programs and projects that bring policy content to life. Key activities include providing financial support for enterprises adopting technological innovation, establishing and operating innovation support centers, incubating and scaling up innovative startups, and promoting linkages among research institutes, universities, and businesses. Throughout this process, cadres and civil servants plan and execute initiatives and bear responsibility for monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting programs to align with practical realities.

Another essential task is organizing policy communication activities directed at beneficiaries and society. When many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups still lack information or access to support mechanisms, the role of cadres and civil servants in communication becomes particularly essential. Communication can take various forms, including television, radio, seminars, forums, online portals, and social media platforms. Providing complete, transparent, and easily accessible information enables organizations and individuals to engage in and benefit from innovation policies effectively and actively.

Additionally, cadres and civil servants are responsible for organizing the implementation apparatus by establishing inter-sectoral and inter-regional coordination mechanisms, clearly assigning responsibilities among government levels and relevant agencies, and ensuring the coherent and effective implementation of policy nationwide.

Another critical function is mobilizing social resources to implement innovation policies. Through policy consultation and proposal activities, cadres and civil servants can promote private sector participation and

enhance international cooperation, thereby reducing pressure on the state budget and diversifying resources for innovation-driven development.

Ultimately, cadres and civil servants are the core force responsible for monitoring, supervising, and evaluating policy implementation. Evaluation is carried out at three levels, namely outputs, outcomes, and impacts. These activities not only ensure transparency and accountability but also provide practical evidence for timely policy adjustments in line with the socio-economic development needs of each period.

3. Current situation regarding the role of cadres and civil servants in the formulation and implementation of innovation policies

3.1. Achievements

Civil servants play a central role in formulating and implementing innovation policies, acting as the core advisory force to state agencies in strategy development, policy proposal, and implementation. In recent years, cadres and civil servants have proactively advised and proposed on issuing numerous essential policy documents, reflecting an innovative mindset and a long-term vision for developing science, technology, and innovation in Vietnam.

One notable document is Decision No. 569/QĐ-TTg, dated May 11, 2022, which approved the “Strategy for the Development of Science, Technology and Innovation to 2030.” This strategy aims to enhance the contribution of R&D to economic growth, promote the development of science and technology enterprises, and foster the national innovation ecosystem. Initiatives such as linking science and technology tasks to specific outputs, granting greater autonomy to research institutions, and establishing research institutes and technology enterprises

demonstrate a shift in governance thinking in which the advisory role of cadres and civil servants has been a decisive factor.

Another significant milestone is the establishment of the National Innovation Center (NIC) under Decision No. 269/QĐ-TTg dated March 8, 2019, issued by the Prime Minister, accompanied by a legal framework set out in Decree No. 94/2020/ND-CP dated August 21, 2020, by the Government. The establishment of the NIC reflects the proactive and innovative spirit of cadres and civil servants in policy research and development. The NIC now serves as a strategic hub for promoting the innovation ecosystem, connecting enterprises, research institutes, and universities, developing high-quality human resources, and supporting enterprises in accessing advanced technological resources.

Notably, innovation policies have not only targeted enterprises and research institutions but have also extended to the public administration workforce itself. Decree No. 73/2023/ND-CP dated September 29, 2023, issued by the Government, exemplifies a breakthrough mindset in public governance, recognizing and encouraging cadres and civil servants to “dare to think, act, and innovate for the public good.” Introducing incentive mechanisms that reward effective initiatives by cadres and civil servants marks a significant step forward in fostering an innovative environment within the public sector.

In addition to their advisory and policy-formulating functions, cadres and civil servants are the primary force in translating policies into practice. One notable responsibility is policy communication, which bridges the gap between the state and policy beneficiaries such as enterprises, research institutes, and the general public. From central to local levels, cadres and civil servants have

proactively communicated policy through various channels, including television, press, electronic portals, social media, and specialized conferences. Notably, in 2025, the Ministry of Science and Technology organized a series of high-profile communication campaigns, including events celebrating World Creativity and Innovation Day, aimed at raising public awareness, and encouraging active participation in the national innovation ecosystem (Nhan Dan Newspaper, 2025).

3.2. Limitations and underlying causes

Alongside the notable achievements, the contingent of cadres and cadres and civil servants involved in the formulation and implementation of innovation policies in Vietnam still exhibits several limitations, which negatively affect policy quality and the effectiveness of practical implementation.

Firstly, the content of some policies remains inconsistent and has yet to demonstrate real effectiveness. Many critical regulations have not been issued; notably, there are still no clear criteria for identifying innovative enterprises or green innovation enterprises. Moreover, transparent and streamlined procedures for businesses to access support and incentive mechanisms have not been adequately designed. Although several legal documents have been promulgated, their implementation in practice still faces numerous obstacles due to the lack of detailed guidance or complicated administrative procedures.

For example, Decree No. 13/2019/ND-CP dated February 1, 2019, issued by the Government, stipulates incentives for science and technology enterprises, such as corporate income tax exemptions and reductions, land lease incentives, credit support, and import-export tax benefits. However, according to a 2024 survey conducted by the Vietnam

Association of Science and Technology Enterprises involving 167 enterprises, only six businesses had benefited from these incentive policies (Business Forum Magazine, 2024). This indicates ineffective implementation, primarily due to burdensome approval procedures and a lack of proactive engagement from regulatory agencies.

Similarly, policies supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly those in the field of innovative startups, have not been consistently developed or implemented. Although Resolution No. 52-NQ/TW dated September 27, 2019, issued by the Politburo, identified the national orientation toward proactive participation in the Industrial Revolution 4.0, no specific legal documents regarding fintech pilot mechanisms have been issued to date. This creates a regulatory gap in the coordination and support for new technology-based business models.

Secondly, in terms of organizational structure, the Ministry of Science and Technology - the lead agency responsible for state management of innovation - has not yet clearly defined the scope of functions, organizational structure, and the need for dedicated human resources for this field, especially at the local level. This lack of clarity hinders inter-sectoral coordination, resource mobilization, and the effective implementation of policies. Notably, the absence of specialized units in charge of innovation at provincial departments and agencies remains a significant bottleneck that needs to be urgently addressed.

The aforementioned limitations stem from several key underlying causes:

Firstly, although many cadres and civil servants in leadership positions have recognized the importance of innovation, policy thinking remains largely conventional

and lacks sensitivity to rapid changes in reality and market demands. As a result, policies are often issued belatedly, lack foresight, and fall short of meeting the expectations of enterprises and citizens - the direct beneficiaries.

Secondly, the capacity of cadres and civil servants to apply technology, utilize modern management tools and adopt data-driven policy-making approaches remains limited. Consequently, the implementation of innovation programs tends to be superficial and fails to produce substantial impacts.

Thirdly, current remuneration, salaries, and working conditions are not sufficiently attractive to those involved in policy advisory roles for innovation. This lack of material and psychological motivation hinders the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel while also reducing initiative and willingness to propose bold, creative policy solutions.

These limitations and their root causes indicate that, in addition to improving the institutional framework and enhancing policy quality, comprehensive solutions are needed to strengthen capacities and create enabling conditions. This is crucial for enabling cadres and civil servants to take on proactive and creative roles in the formulation and implementation of national innovation policies.

4. Some recommendations

The contingent of cadres and civil servants plays a central role in policy formulation and serves as the core force in implementing innovation policies. However, in the context of rapid digital transformation and increasingly intense global competition, the current capacity of public cadres needs to be reinforced and enhanced to meet the growing demands of development. The improvement

of the policy system cannot succeed without a team of cadres who possess strategic vision and the ability to adapt and innovate. Strengthening the capacity of cadres and civil servants is the foundation for effectively implementing innovation policies.

This guiding principle was clearly stated at the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, which emphasized the need to develop a contingent of cadres with innovative thinking and adaptive capacity in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The Politburo issued Conclusion No. 14-KL/TW dated September 22, 2021, on encouraging and protecting dynamic and creative cadres for the common good. This document affirms: "It is essential to focus on building a team of cadres... who are determined to innovate, dare to think, dare to act, dare to make breakthroughs, ready to face difficulties and challenges, and always strive to act for the common good." The National Digital Transformation Program to 2025, with an orientation toward 2030, aims to form a contingent of cadres and civil servants capable of applying digital technologies and promoting institutional reform through innovative tools.

Below are several solutions aimed at strengthening the capacity of cadres and civil servants in formulating and implementing innovation policies:

Firstly, reforming training programs and enhancing global knowledge connectivity for cadres and civil servants. Public personnel must improve their professional capacity and modern management skills to take the initiative in formulating and implementing innovation policies. Training programs should shift from theoretical instruction to practical coaching in policy-making, digital skills, data analysis, and systems thinking. At the same time, cooperation with international organizations and reputable research

institutions should be expanded to share experiences and stay updated on global trends in policy design and implementation.

Secondly, promoting the application of digital technology in public administration. Strengthening digital platforms and automation tools will enhance work efficiency, reduce manual processing time, and facilitate evidence-based policy-making. Tools such as project management software, inter-sectoral shared data systems, and big data analytics can significantly improve the feasibility and practicality of innovation policies.

Thirdly, establishing a remuneration system that matches the capabilities of cadres and civil servants. To create genuine motivation for public personnel to remain committed and contribute to public service in the long term, developing a fair and appropriate salary mechanism is necessary. This system should be linked to job position, title, workload, and work quality while incorporating a precise reward mechanism for those willing to innovate, take initiative, and be accountable. Such a system will help maximize capacity and attract talented individuals to work in the public sector.

5. Key conditions

In the context where innovation has become a strategic factor in socio-economic development, fully harnessing the role of cadres and civil servants cannot be separated from foundational and systemic conditions. These conditions must be designed to create a favorable environment and provide comprehensive and substantive support mechanisms, enabling cadres and civil servants to succeed in formulating and implementing innovation policies.

Condition 1: An open and flexible legal and institutional framework. A prerequisite is establishing an open and flexible legal system

that allows cadres and civil servants to experiment with and apply innovative models within a controlled scope. This will encourage learning, scaling up practical models, and timely policy adjustments. Existing legal regulations should be reviewed and revised to minimize rigidity, particularly in formulating and implementing new initiatives in the public sector.

Condition 2: Ensuring financial resources and infrastructure for innovation. In addition to a solid legal framework, promoting the role of cadres and civil servants in fostering innovation requires adequate investment resources, including funding, technology, and modern infrastructure. Government agencies should be equipped with innovative technology platforms, integrated management software, and tools for process digitalization to support cadres and civil servants in data analysis, decision-making, policy implementation, and evaluation.

Condition 3: Building an organizational culture of innovation. An innovative environment cannot exist without a creative organizational culture - one in which new ideas are welcomed and reasonably evaluated. Leaders should play a supportive role, provide motivation, and be willing to accept the inherent risks of experimentation. This will empower cadres and civil servants to feel confident and willing to engage in new approaches and methods in formulating and implementing innovation policies.

6. Conclusion

Innovation is becoming a strategic pillar in Vietnam's path toward sustainable development in the context of a rapidly evolving knowledge-based economy and digital transformation. Cadres and civil servants not only play an advisory and policy-making role but are also the key actors in

implementing innovation policies. Strengthening the capacity of this workforce is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of innovation policy.

A team of highly qualified cadres and civil servants with strong innovative thinking and adaptive capabilities will drive improvements in policy design and implementation effectiveness in practice. Amid global competition and the fast-paced advancement of technology, building a contingent of public personnel who “dare to think, dare to act, and dare to innovate for the common good” is not only a necessary condition but also a key to realizing the national development vision, ushering the country into a new era of national rise.

References:

1. Hai, N. H. (2019). *Public policy science - Theory and practice*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
2. Hai, N. H. (2020). *Public policy implementation - Theory and practice*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
3. OECD. (2009). *Innovation in firms: A microeconomic perspective*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/44120491.pdf>
4. National Assembly. (2018). *Law on Science and Technology 2018*.
5. Nhan Dan Newspaper. (2025). *Responding to the World Creativity and Innovation Day 2025*. Retrieved May 20, 2025, from <https://nhandan.vn/huong-ung-ngay-sang-tao-va-doi-moi-sang-tao-the-gioi-nam-2025-post872653.html>
6. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). (2020). *The Global Innovation Index 2020*. Retrieved from https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_gii_2020.pdf
7. Business Forum Magazine. (2024). *Science and technology enterprises struggling to access preferential policies*. Retrieved May 20, 2025, from <https://diendandoanhnghiep.vn/doanh-nghiep-khoa-hoc-cong-nghe-kho-tiep-can-chinh-sach-uu-dai-10130451.html>