

# PUBLIC-SECTOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: GLOBAL EXPERIENCES AND REGULATORY POLICY IMPLICATION

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## Abstract

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The Vietnamese Government is restructuring the state apparatus in a streamlined and efficient manner, in line with the model of many countries in the world today. The establishment of a two-tier local government as it is today in Vietnam is a strong breakthrough that not only changes the state apparatus but also requires state civil servants to change to adapt to the current context. Study applies a qualitative, comparative methodology based on secondary data drawn from official policy documents, government reports, academic literature, and publicly available statistics. In addition an analysis of the implementation of public-sector human resource development (HRD) policies in Singapore, the United Kingdom, and Japan, as well as an evaluation of the implementation of these policies in Vietnam, The research examines key dimensions of public-sector HRD in the context of human resource mechanisms, thus, several solutions such as perfecting the policy on staff downsizing and utilizing the public workforce after downsizing; training and professional development policies; talent attraction and retention policies; as well as effective support policies for career transitions of officials and civil servants following mergers, in the context of the current streamlining of the state apparatus in Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Development Policy, Human Resources, Public Sector Human Resources, Apparatus Merger in Vietnam, International Experience

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In an industrialized, modernized society, human resources are the most important asset for development. Any country or nation in the world that aspires to develop must have people who are capable and sufficiently qualified to effectively harness other resources. For this reason, every

country implements policies to develop human resources in both the public and private sectors to meet society's development needs. Today, public-sector human resource development (HRD) is one of the key issues prioritized by most countries worldwide, as it directly determines the effectiveness of a nation's public service. In other words, each country formulates public-

sector HRD policies in line with its own public administration objectives.

Vietnam currently faces deep international integration and rapid digital transformation, alongside the restructuring and streamlining of its state apparatus, which demands reasonable and effective solutions for implementing public-sector HRD policies. This period marks a pivotal transformation of Vietnam's civil service, and thus it is essential to learn from the valuable experiences of other countries in developing public-sector human resources. Moreover, cultivating high-quality public-sector human resources is the key factor in ensuring the effective operation of the state administrative machinery.

Existing studies on public sector HRD in Vietnam (Ngan, 2025; Ngoi, 2015; Son & Duc, 2024; Toan, 2020) focus on individual policy components. In addition, studies adopt descriptive or normative approaches without placing Vietnam's experience within a broader comparative international context. This also indicates that there is a lack of qualitative research that systematically analyzes HRD policies as an integrated mechanism throughout the civil servant lifecycle, especially in the context of large-scale administrative restructuring.

By adopting the qualitative, policy-oriented conceptual framework in public administration theory and HRD literature. The study analyzes the framework functions to interpret policy intention, institutional arrangements, and observed outcomes. This paper presents the public-sector HRD experiences of countries such as Singapore, the United Kingdom (UK), and Japan, from which it draws several suggestions for Vietnam's current efforts to implement public-sector HRD policies amid state apparatus streamlining. The objective of the paper is to examine the key approaches to public sector HRD reflected in selected international experiences, and to analyze the current situation of HRD in Vietnam during the period of restructuring. In addition, to identify major limitations and policy gaps in Vietnam's HRD mechanisms. Therefore, the study addresses the following research questions:

*RQ1: What are the core features of public sector HRD policies in selected international practices?*

*RQ2: How are public sector HRD policies currently implemented in Vietnam in the context of restructuring?*

*RQ3: What limitations and challenges exist in Vietnam's public sector system?*

*RQ4: What policy implications can be drawn to improve public sector HRD in Vietnam?*

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 discusses the literature. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 presents the study's findings, and Section 5 discusses the findings. Section 6 provides the conclusion.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Definition of human resource development in the public sectors

Human resources in the public sector constitute a fundamental component of the public administration system and play a decisive role in

ensuring the effectiveness and responsiveness of government institutions. In the context of globalization, digital transformation complex governance demands, conceptualizing "public sector human resources" is essential not only for theoretical advancement but also for guiding administrative reform in both developed and developing countries, including Vietnam

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016), governments rely on dedicated and skilled public servants to promote policy goals into tangible results that meet the citizens' expectations. This perspective shows that public human resources are not only a workforce, but are deemed to be a strategic determinant of administrative quality, delivery performance, and public trust, with the emphasize of capacity, professionalism, and public values (OECD, 2017).

Public sector human resource is defined as individuals performing state functions and delivering public services based on competence, ethics, accountability, and responsiveness (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2005). This definition is also aligned with the requirement for public services in Vietnam, as carders, civil servants, and public employees working in party and state agencies (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018).

Overall, the conceptualization of public sector human resources varies depending on governance traditions and institutional contexts. This also indicates that the public sector human resources in Vietnam strongly incorporates international standards as part of public administration modernization.

### 2.2. Key purpose of managing human resource development

Human resources in the public sector are a decisive factor in the quality of governance, the effectiveness of public services, and the people's trust in the state apparatus. According to OECD (2016), civil servants not only perform administrative tasks but are also a strategic force in formulating policies and providing high-quality public services. UNDP (2005) also emphasizes that the capacity, quality, and accountability of public human resources are the foundation for ensuring effective governance. In Vietnam, the team of cadres, civil servants, and public employees is responsible for operating state agencies and implementing administrative reforms (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018). In the modern context, with digital transformation, international integration, and increasing demand for public services, improving capacity, innovating working methods, and maintaining ethical standards is extremely necessary. Developing public human resources not only helps improve management efficiency but also strengthens social trust, creating a solid foundation for Vietnam's sustainable development.

In the context of global integration, public human resources also play the role of a "bridge" between Vietnam and international standards. Civil servants need to have a solid grasp of international law, foreign language skills, multidimensional management capacity, and the ability to implement policies in compliance with trade agreements, which

contributes to enhancing national prestige and promoting sustainable development.

In short, human resources in the public sector are not only the force performing administrative tasks but also the strategic factor determining the quality of governance, the effectiveness of service provision, the ability to adapt to change, and social trust. In the current context of Vietnam, with the requirements of digital transformation, administrative reform, and international integration, improving the capacity, qualities, ethics, and motivation of civil servants is an urgent and strategic task, shaping Vietnam's ability to face global challenges and develop sustainably.

### 2.3. Functions of human resource management

Public sector human resource management (HRM) is a core element to ensure the effective operation of the state apparatus, implementation of public policies, and provision of quality services to the people. The function of HRM in the public sector includes four main groups.

First, recruitment and use of human resources: selecting civil servants with appropriate qualifications, capacity, and moral qualities ensures the effective operation of the state apparatus (OECD, 2017). The activities involve forecasting and planning, job analysis, recruitment and selection, including the E-HRM (Rabbi, 2025), which must be done accordingly to match the right person for the right place (Padon & Segundo, 2025).

Second, training, fostering, and developing professional capacity: improving the qualifications, management skills, innovative thinking, and digital capacity of civil servants to help them meet requirements in the context of digital transformation and administrative reform (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018). In today's context, with the development of technologies and globalization, training and development (including e-training) play important roles for worker commitment and satisfaction level of employees (Alhammadi & Yahya, 2021) by equipping them with appropriate knowledge, skills, and expertise to perform the job (Blom et al., 2024).

Third, evaluating work performance and implementing rewards and discipline: this mechanism helps maintain fairness, transparency, and creates internal motivation for civil servants, while ensuring that capacity is used for the right purposes (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2009). A performance appraisal system can promote the workforce, building a connection between peers and culture (Pardon & Segundo, 2025), thus the objectives ensure the performance is appraised and compensated (Guy & Mastracci, 2023).

Fourth, build a cohesive and innovative working environment: create favorable conditions for civil servants to contribute ideas, improve processes, and participate in innovation, contributing to improving the quality of public services (OECD, 2016). Providing the best working conditions, including transparency of communication and support from the management level, can create a level of satisfaction (Soni, 2025).

In Vietnam, the function of public HRM is particularly important in the context of administrative reform and international integration. The Ministry of Home Affairs (2018) emphasized that building an effective public HRM mechanism requires a combination of laws, remuneration policies, competency frameworks, and performance evaluation to encourage the intrinsic motivation of civil servants, helping them serve the people in a transparent, professional, and effective manner. For example, the implementation of the Competency Framework for Civil Servants and Officials Assessment System in some localities has helped identify the strengths, weaknesses, and training needs of the staff, while promoting improvements in public service performance.

In short, HRM in the public sector is the pillar for building an effective, dynamic, and trustworthy state apparatus. Performing these functions well helps the state apparatus optimize resources, enhance public service capacity, improve service quality, strengthen public trust, and is a key factor for Vietnam to meet modern challenges and international integration.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, comparative research design to examine public-sector HRD policies and practices in the context of administrative restructuring. The research draws upon selected international experiences in HRD policy implementation and places them in dialogue with Vietnam's current reform context, with the aim of identifying policy implications relevant to Vietnam's ongoing process of streamlining the state administrative apparatus. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study seeks to interpret policy orientations, institutional arrangements, and governance practices rather than to test hypotheses or quantify causal relationships. The comparative perspective allows for the identification of similarities, differences, and transferable lessons across administrative systems, thereby enriching the analytical depth of the study.

Based on secondary data being collected from a wide range of authoritative and publicly available sources. These sources primarily include official government documents and policy papers, such as laws, resolutions, decrees, strategies, and national programs related to public-sector HRD. In the case of Vietnam, particular attention is given to policy documents issued during the 2019–2024 period, which marks a critical phase of administrative reform, staff downsizing, and institutional restructuring. In addition, academic publications, policy reports, and relevant studies from reputable journals and research institutions are used to supplement and contextualize the analysis. The reliance on official and peer-reviewed sources helps ensure the reliability and credibility of the data.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Experiences of countries worldwide in implementing public-sector human resource development policies

#### 4.1.1. Singapore's experience

The Republic of Singapore is a small country (699 km<sup>2</sup>) with a population of about 5 million and very limited natural resources, yet it has a highly developed economy and attracts significant foreign investment. One of the key reasons behind Singapore's extraordinary development today is the effective measures it employs to manage public-sector human resources.

The body responsible for overseeing public-sector HRM in Singapore is the Public Service Commission. This independent agency handles recruitment and personnel management for most government bodies (excluding the armed forces, judiciary, and police). Each year, the Public Service Commission awards approximately 60 scholarships to attract young, talented individuals into public service. These Public Service Commission scholarships are used to train truly outstanding candidates, who are then recruited into roles that match their abilities within the public machinery. In addition, since 2002, the Singapore Government has run the Management Associate Programme to draw scholars into the public sector. Recruitment is based strictly on merit and educational qualifications: civil-service appointments in Singapore are made against specific job descriptions, ensuring that candidates meet the requirements and responsibilities of each position (Public Service Commission, Singapore, 2024).

Regarding performance appraisal, the Singapore Government emphasizes fairness and objectivity. Evaluations consider the whole person — both competence and conduct. The appraisal process follows a strict chain of command: supervisors assess their direct subordinates; subordinates do not appraise supervisors; and there is no peer-level assessment. An appraiser must have worked directly with the appraisee for at least six months and be the person's immediate superior. This procedure ensures accuracy and impartiality in performance evaluations.

On remuneration, the Singapore Government benchmarks civil-service salaries against the private sector, resulting in some of the highest public-sector pay scales in the region. Competitive pay has enabled Singapore to attract and retain top talent in its public institutions. Conversely, penalties for misconduct, especially corruption, are extremely severe. Civil servants convicted of corrupt practices forfeit their pensions and other benefits, even in retirement, and may face prison terms (van der Wal, 2021).

Singapore has one of the leading education systems in Asia, so the government places great emphasis on training and development for civil servants, especially newly recruited staff and those changing positions. Each year, Singaporean civil servants are required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of training, of which 60% must cover professional/technical subjects and 40% must focus on competency and skills development. The civil-

service training process in Singapore is built around job requirements and the demands of each position (Duong, 2025). Specifically, the process consists of five stages:

1. *Introduction*: This stage is for newly recruited civil servants or those who have been transferred. Within the first 1–3 months of joining a public body or changing roles, civil servants attend an orientation and induction course to outline the requirements and responsibilities of their new positions.

2. *Basic*: In this stage, training and development activities help civil servants adapt to their roles. Target participants are those in their first year of service in a public organization.

3. *Advanced*: This stage provides training on knowledge and skills directly related to their roles, enabling civil servants with 1–3 years of experience to perform their duties more effectively.

4. *Expanded*: At this stage, training covers deeper and broader subject matter so that civil servants can extend beyond their current roles and handle related tasks when needed.

5. *Continuing*: In this ongoing stage, civil servants receive training not only related to their current positions but also aimed at enhancing their future career potential.

From this process, the Singapore Government places a high priority on tailored training and development for each civil-service role to ensure staff can execute their duties effectively.

#### 4.1.2. The United Kingdom's experience

The UK is an island nation with an area of 243,610 km<sup>2</sup> (241,930 km<sup>2</sup> land; 1,680 km<sup>2</sup> inland waters), a population of 65 million, and a workforce of about 32.8 million — 5.4 million of whom are employed in the public sector. The UK Civil Service has no single, unified structure; each of the four nations within the UK maintains its own civil-service system (Government People Group, 2024). Key features of the UK's public-sector HRD policy include attraction and recruitment, performance appraisal, remuneration and benefits, and training and development.

##### *Attraction and recruitment*

The Civil Service Commission holds authority over all civil-service recruitment. Today, hiring is based on merit and competency rather than solely on academic credentials, resulting in a more dynamic workforce. Many senior posts are filled by recruiting talent directly from the private sector to bring in practical experience. The UK's highly effective e-government infrastructure supports digital processes at every stage of recruitment, ensuring transparency and attracting candidates from both public and private organizations. A robust competency framework underpins each vacancy, ensuring the right people, with the right skills and in the right numbers and grades, are appointed (UK Parliament, 2024).

##### *Performance appraisal*

The government places great emphasis on fair, streamlined evaluation forms that align with each

department's business cycle. Appraisals occur twice yearly — mid-year and year-end — and civil servants are encouraged to assess, highlighting areas for further training and improvement. Typically, within 12 months of appraisal, staff are enrolled in targeted development programs to address any identified skills gaps (UK Government, 2025).

#### *Remuneration and benefits*

Public-sector salaries are positioned among the higher pay bands nationally. Remuneration is influenced by grade, role, experience, and additional factors. The national minimum wage applies under certain conditions, though senior civil servants — with specialized knowledge, skills, and networks — can find themselves lured by private-sector offers, as the public sector must balance competitiveness with fiscal responsibility (Government People Group, 2024).

#### *Training and development*

Civil servants are encouraged to adopt a continuous “learning-on-the-job” ethos — learning through work tasks, peer interactions, and real-world experience. The government promotes online learning and requires a minimum of five days (37 hours) of learning per year. Training content is tailored by grade and role. The “70-20-10” model guides the approach: 70% learning through practical work, 20% through coaching and peer support, and 10% through formal courses. For newly appointed or promoted staff, one-to-one mentoring is provided to ensure they acquire all necessary knowledge and skills for their new positions (Government People Group, 2024).

#### *4.1.3. Japan's experience*

Japan is a country that applies a career-based civil service system, so its public-sector human resource policies share some similarities with Vietnam, such as the difficulty of dismissing state employees and the concept of “lifetime” service. However, Japan's public-sector HRD policies offer many valuable lessons.

#### *Recruitment policy*

The Japanese Government places great emphasis on developing public-sector human resources. Consequently, recruitment policies are designed to ensure that the right person is selected for the right job. Japan applies two fundamental principles throughout its civil-service examinations: 1) transparency, fairness, and equal treatment in the recruitment process; and 2) merit-based selection, where results accurately reflect a candidate's true ability. All recruitment is publicly advertised through mass media, and only those demonstrably capable and qualified are appointed (Japanese National Public Service Act, 1947). Each year, the National Personnel Authority of Japan conducts three examination rounds: one for Type I (senior) civil servants and two for Type II and Type III (junior) positions. Successful Type I

candidates receive leadership training to prepare them for future managerial roles, while Type II and III appointees assume specific technical or operational duties (Oyama, 2007).

#### *Utilization policy*

Japan's civil service is structured on a career-based model, but placement is by job position. While the overall system is highly hierarchical — reflecting the career-based tradition — assignments align with specific job profiles. Civil servants appointed to a given position must remain in that role unless they pass a formal transfer examination. This motivates staff to develop their competencies for promotion and helps ensure that only the most capable individuals advance to leadership posts. A notable feature is Japan's rotation policy: the government actively rotates personnel between central and local agencies, and even facilitates exchanges between the public and private sectors to strengthen mutual understanding and build a citizen-centered administration (Nishimura, 2024).

#### *Training and development policy*

Japan structures civil-service training around job requirements and practical experience. On-the-job training and mentorship — learning from seasoned colleagues — are widespread (National Personnel Authority, n.d.). At each public organization, senior officers are tasked with guiding younger or newly recruited civil servants. At year's end, the success of these mentors is evaluated based on the performance improvements of the mentees (Nishimura, 2024).

#### *Performance evaluation policy*

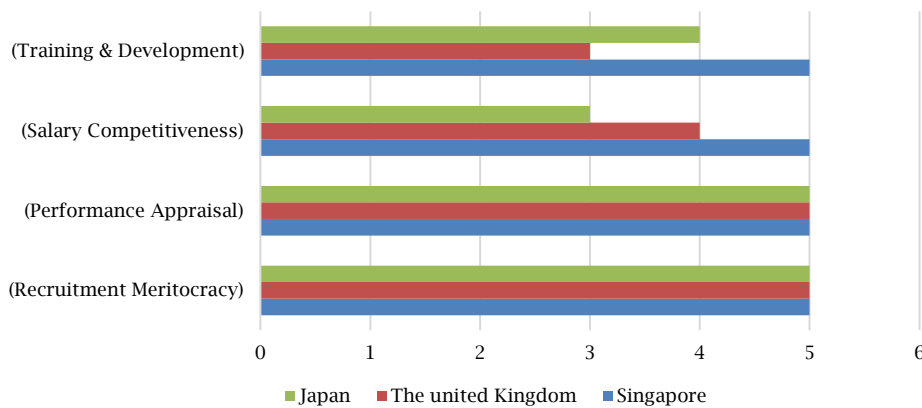
Civil-service appraisals in Japan are based on both work competencies and results, tailored to each position and conducted at regular intervals. Evaluation criteria are scientifically designed to capture the full range of a civil servant's qualities, ensuring they meet both current and anticipated future job demands. Evaluation outcomes are systematically used for promotions, dismissals, salary increases, bonuses, and other personnel decisions (Japanese National Public Service Act, 1947).

#### *Salary and benefits policy*

Because Japan's civil service is career-based, salaries are determined by length of service. Civil-service pay generally does not exceed private-sector levels. Pay increments occur every two to three years, like in Vietnam. In addition to base salary, civil servants receive bonuses three times per year, with total bonus payments capped at five months' salary. This reward structure fosters loyalty and motivates employees to remain in public service.

From the above content, we can compare HRD policies in the public sector of countries such as Singapore, the UK and Japan through the Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Public sector human resource development policies



Based on the comparative figure of public sector HRD policies in Singapore, the UK, and Japan, several clear distinctions emerge in terms of priorities and investment levels among the three countries. Singapore stands out with the highest scores across all four criteria, reflecting a modern, transparent, and highly performance-oriented public personnel management system. Merit-based recruitment, rigorous performance appraisal, competitive compensation, and a well-structured training framework enable Singapore to maintain a highly capable civil service.

The UK also performs strongly in recruitment and performance evaluation, demonstrating its commitment to fairness and transparency. However, salary competitiveness and training show moderate scores, influenced partly by public financial constraints.

Japan shows strengths in recruitment and performance appraisal, yet its salary system remains seniority-based and less competitive compared to the private sector. While training and development are valued, they do not reach the more intensive and structured level seen in Singapore.

Overall, the figure highlights Singapore's comprehensive leadership in HRD policies, while the UK and Japan exhibit notable strengths but still face specific limitations, particularly in compensation and training (Nishimura, 2024).

**4.2. Current situation of human resource development in Vietnam**

In recent times, the Vietnamese Government has effectively implemented the policy of developing human resources in the public sector, meeting the quantity and quality requirements of the state apparatus. Specifically:

*4.2.1. Implementation of recruitment policies*

The period from 2019 to 2024 shows significant fluctuations in the recruitment of newly hired public officials, civil servants, and public employees in

Vietnam, reflecting changes in the socio-economic context and shifts in public administration reform priorities. In 2019 and 2020, the number of new recruits remained relatively stable at around 56-57 million, indicating a steady demand for personnel before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, recruitment surged sharply to 64.98 million, largely driven by the urgent need to reinforce the health and education sectors, as well as regulatory and administrative agencies, in response to the national emergency and to compensate for workforce shortages caused by the pandemic.

From 2022 onward, however, recruitment levels declined noticeably, with 2023 and 2024 dropping to 42.115 million and 39.218 million, respectively. This downward trend aligns with Vietnam's policy direction toward streamlining the administrative apparatus, reducing staffing levels, and tightening entry standards in accordance with Resolution No. 18-NQ/TW and other public service reform initiatives. The post-pandemic context also accelerated digital transformation across government agencies, reducing the demand for new hires and shifting the focus from increasing headcount to improving workforce quality and efficiency.

**Table 1.** Number of officials hired during 2019-2024

Year	Number (million people)
2019	56.457
2020	57.584
2021	64.980
2022	61.282
2023	42.115
2024	39.218

Source: Authors' calculation.

Overall, the data illustrate how Vietnam's public service adapted to evolving circumstances: expanding personnel during a crisis period and subsequently transitioning to restructuring, downsizing, and professionalizing the workforce to meet the demands of modern governance.

**Table 2.** The number of officials, civil servants, and public employees participating in training and professional development programs annually

Year	Total training	Education	Health	Administration	Other public services
2019	534,33	222,03	87,835	146,39	78,075
2020	506,21	210,34	83,212	138,69	73,966
2021	646,82	268,77	106,33	177,21	94,513
2022	562,45	233,71	92,458	154,1	82,185
2023	562,45	233,71	92,458	154,1	82,185
2024	506,21	210,34	83,212	138,69	73,966

Source: Authors' calculation.

The period from 2019 to 2024 shows notable fluctuations in the number of public officials, civil servants, and public employees participating in training and professional development, reflecting both practical conditions and evolving demands for improving public sector capacity. From 2019 to 2020, total training attendance decreased slightly from 534,329 to 506,207, largely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted in-person activities. Nevertheless, sectors such as education and health maintained relatively high participation levels to meet ongoing professional requirements.

In 2021, training participation increased sharply to 646,820 — the highest level in the period. This surge corresponds to the urgent need to strengthen workforce capacity during the pandemic, particularly in the health sector (+23,000 compared to 2020) and education (+58,000), as these fields had to rapidly adapt to crisis response, digital platforms, and new working methods.

From 2022 to 2023, participation stabilized at approximately 562,452 per year, indicating that training demand remained consistently high to support administrative reform, digital transformation, and the standardization of professional titles, especially in the administrative sector (around 154,000 participants annually).

By 2024, total participation declined to 506,207, reflecting a broader shift toward streamlining the public sector, reducing training volumes, and prioritizing quality over quantity. Despite this overall reduction, education and health continued to account for a substantial share, reaffirming their roles as the sectors with the most frequent and essential training needs within Vietnam's public service system.

#### 4.2.2. Job performance of officials, civil servants, and public employees

Over the past period, the public satisfaction index with the public sector in Vietnam has shown that the public service, as well as the team of officials and civil servants, are increasingly performing their assigned tasks effectively. The increasingly high satisfaction index reflects the fact that the professional performance of human resources in the public sector has met the requirements of most people.

Vietnamese citizens are more satisfied with government performance in seven out of eight key areas measured by the 2024 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index, according to findings released on April 15.

There were notable improvements in transparency of local decision-making, control of

public sector corruption, environmental management, and e-governance. There were also positive changes in grassroots participation, government accountability, and public service delivery.

However, administrative procedures remained largely stagnant, highlighting an ongoing bottleneck in Vietnam's public administration reform efforts.

Recently, the Party and State of Vietnam have issued policies to reform the state apparatus, emphasizing the development of public-sector human resources. Notably, Resolutions No. 18-NQ/TW and No. 19-NQ/TW of the Sixth Central Committee (Term XII), together with Decree No. 140/2017/ND-CP on talent attraction, have initiated positive changes.

The implementation of Resolution No. 190/2025/QH15 (effective from February 19, 2025) marked a significant step forward, reducing the number of ministries and ministerial-level agencies from 22 to 17, diminishing overlaps in state management. According to statistics as of April 30, 2025, the number of central-level officers and civil servants decreased by approximately 15%, while local-level personnel decreased by around 18%, and commune-level administrative units merged (National Assembly, 2025). The complete elimination of district-level administrative bodies and the consolidation of commune-level authorities represent a new milestone, fundamentally transforming the state apparatus toward greater efficiency and leaner operations.

At the same time, policies to attract high-quality human resources have yielded encouraging early results. In 2024, over 1,200 outstanding young officers were recruited into the public sector under talent-attraction schemes, contributing to workforce rejuvenation and enhancing the competitiveness of the state machinery.

During the 2023–2025 period, Vietnam has recorded noteworthy achievements in both staff reductions and public-sector HRD:

- Staff reduction: by the end of 2024, the country had cut 16,149 positions, including 217 at the ministerial level and 15,932 at the local level (“Tinh giảm hơn 16.000 biên chế”, 2025).

- Organizational restructuring: the reorganization of the state administrative apparatus eliminated thirteen provincial-level departments and equivalents, and 2,613 departmental-level and equivalent units at the local level (Vietnam Lawyers, 2015).

In summary, Vietnam has taken historic strides in restructuring its state management apparatus; accordingly, reorganizing human resources within public organizations is an essential solution for the current context.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1. Limitation and challenges of Vietnam in human resource development policies

In addition to the achievements already made, the reality of implementing public-sector HRD policies still reveals several notable limitations and challenges:

First, the staff-reduction process remains mechanical and is not based on a genuine assessment of officials' and civil servants' work effectiveness and competencies. This results in numeric cuts without truly improving the quality of the workforce. Specifically:

The downsizing is primarily based on quantity rather than quality of human resources. In many places, the criteria for streamlining are administrative in nature, not based on assessing competence, work efficiency, and the extent to which job requirements are met (Trung, 2024). As a result, the risk of "retaining unsuitable personnel while dismissing competent ones" persists, degrading the quality of the workforce of officials, civil servants, and public employees.

The policy of reducing the workforce creates significant pressure on the remaining staff. Increased workload, while compensation, salaries, and working conditions have not improved proportionally, accordingly, the report (World Bank, 2025) shows that there is a wage gap between public and private sector in Vietnam, which can reduce motivation, increase reluctance to innovate, and even lead to brain drain to the private sector.

There is a lack of synchronization between workforce reduction and salary reform and performance evaluation. In many cases, workforce reduction has not been accompanied by a mechanism for paying salaries based on job position and performance. Therefore, the goal of "fewer people but more efficient work" has not been achieved as expected (Vinh Giang, 2025).

Negative impacts on some specific sectors such as education, healthcare, science and technology, and grassroots management (Rantanen et al., 2020). The indiscriminate and inflexible application of staff reductions across sectors and geographical areas may lead to manpower shortages in already struggling areas, directly affecting the quality of essential public services.

Consequently, current personnel assignments do not always align with individuals' actual abilities or the roles they occupy. Within the organizational structure, many officials and civil servants continue to serve in positions that do not match their trained specialties.

Second, Vietnam's evaluation policy for public-sector human resources is formalistic, with capacity-based assessments that lack consistency, transparency, and objectivity. The evaluation criteria are overly general, insufficiently specific, and difficult to measure. Specifically:

The evaluation criteria are still heavily formal and qualitative, failing to fully reflect the results of public service performance. Evaluations are often based on general comments such as "task completed", "disciplined", and "responsible", while lacking specific measurable indicators linked to job output (Trung, 2024). This reduces objectivity and

comparability between individuals and units (Vanhala & Stavrou, 2013).

The evaluation criteria are not closely linked to job positions and task performance capabilities. In many agencies, evaluations still apply a general framework of criteria for different job titles, failing to accurately reflect the specific requirements of each position. As a result, the professional competence, skills, and level of job performance of each individual are not accurately quantified and recorded (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2025).

The evaluations still focus more on the process than on results and impact. Current criteria often focus on adherence to procedures, working hours, and administrative discipline, while paying little attention to final results, citizen satisfaction, and the quality of public services (Anh Vu et al., 2022). This undermines the motivation for innovation and creativity among officials and civil servants.

Lack of a multi-dimensional and independent evaluation mechanism. Evaluations are mainly conducted by the head or direct superior, with little participation from colleagues, beneficiaries of public services, or independent evaluators. Therefore, the risk of subjectivity, favoritism, or egalitarianism in evaluations remains prevalent.

Evaluation results are not closely linked to remuneration and career development. In many cases, evaluations are merely a year-end procedure and do not become a substantive basis for performance-based pay (Zhang, 2024), training, or personnel selection. This diminishes the regulatory and incentive role of the evaluation system (Tran & Bui, 2026).

This leads to inequalities in rewards, promotions, and personnel utilization, which in turn undermines employees' morale and motivation.

Third, policies to attract high-quality talent into the public sector are not yet strong or competitive enough compared to the private sector. Remuneration, working conditions, and promotion opportunities remain limited, reducing the appeal for top talent — especially in fields such as information technology, finance, and strategic management.

Salaries, income, and benefits in the public sector are primarily based on an average salary scale, failing to accurately reflect the market value of high-quality labor (World Bank, 2025). This puts the public sector at a significant disadvantage in attracting talent, especially in fields such as information technology, finance, science and technology, and modern public administration.

The recruitment and utilization mechanisms for talent are still heavily bureaucratic and inflexible (UNDP, 2025). Recruitment processes in the public sector are often lengthy, with many procedures, and selection criteria are not truly based on competence and achievements. The emphasis on attracting talent is mainly based on academic qualifications, lacking criteria for evaluating actual competence when recruiting talent into the state system (Giang, 2025).

The working environment and career development opportunities are not sufficiently attractive to talent. In many state agencies, the space for innovation, professional autonomy, and opportunities for advancement are limited by hierarchical management mechanisms based on

seniority and staffing levels (Hoa & Hung, 2025). Talented individuals struggle to develop their abilities and are often given insufficient authority, leading to a lack of long-term commitment to the public sector.

Fourth, preparation for career transitions for officials and civil servants affected by staff reductions has not received adequate attention. Former public-sector employees face psychological and livelihood difficulties after leaving, due to a lack of effective support policies for retraining, job placement, and career counselling.

Some civil servants, after downsizing, face psychological shock due to the sudden change in their social roles, professional status, and previously stable work environment ("Leaving the comfort zone", 2025). In the context of an increasingly competitive labor market demanding new skills, especially digital and adaptive skills, many struggle to reintegrate into the private sector or new forms of employment (Khanh, 2024).

Furthermore, policies for retraining and upskilling this workforce are limited in scope and effectiveness. Retraining is not closely aligned with the actual needs of the labor market and does not focus on transitional skills such as information technology, management, public-private services, or entrepreneurship (UNDP, 2025). As a result, many former civil servants find it difficult to find suitable jobs, experience unstable incomes, and this directly impacts their livelihoods and social security.

If these limitations and challenges are not addressed promptly and effectively, they will significantly impair the goal of building a high-quality civil-service workforce, slow administrative reform, and hinder Vietnam's sustainable development and international integration.

## 5.2. Experiences for Vietnam in human resource development policies

### 5.2.1. Reforming merit-based recruitment mechanisms

Experiences from Singapore, the UK, and Japan show that merit-based recruitment is essential for building a high-quality civil service. These countries apply transparent, competitive selection procedures that assess applicants based on the actual requirements of each position. For Vietnam, this means shifting from recruitment based on qualifications or seniority to recruitment based strictly on competencies. Developing and applying competency frameworks, expanding competitive examinations, and enhancing the use of digital recruitment tools will help ensure the right person is selected for the right job while minimizing formality or preferential hiring. This is a foundational step toward strengthening the civil service in line with administrative reform goals.

### 5.2.2. Improving performance appraisal systems

Lessons from Singapore and the UK demonstrate that effective performance appraisal must accurately reflect employees' contributions and professional behavior. These countries implement periodic evaluations tied to work results, using them as

the basis for training, reward, promotion, or disciplinary actions. For Vietnam, reforming performance appraisal toward greater transparency, objectivity, and quantification is essential. The system should differentiate among various levels of task completion to avoid uniform assessments. A scientific and fair appraisal mechanism will create motivation for employees to improve and contribute to the development of a more professional, service-oriented public administration.

### 5.2.3. Reforming salary and compensation policies

Attractive salary policies enable Singapore and the UK to draw highly qualified professionals to the public sector, while Japan maintains long-term employee commitment through seniority-based pay and frequent bonuses. From these insights, Vietnam needs to accelerate salary reform based on job positions, ensuring competitive pay for roles requiring high expertise. Beyond basic salary, bonuses, allowances, and benefits should be closely linked to actual performance to encourage productivity and accountability. A well-designed compensation system will not only enhance work efficiency but also reduce the outflow of talent from the public to the private sector.

### 5.2.4. Strengthening training and human resource development

Countries such as Singapore, Japan, and the UK consider training and development fundamental to managing public-sector personnel. Models such as phased training, on-the-job learning, e-learning, and competency-based development enable civil servants to adapt quickly and improve performance. In Vietnam, shifting from formalistic training to practical, needs-based training is vital. Training content should reflect the demands of each job position, align with career development pathways, and contribute to the modernization of public administration. Promoting lifelong learning and self-directed professional development will help create a flexible, professional, and future-ready civil service workforce.

### 5.2.5. Promoting staff rotation and strengthening discipline

Japan's experience shows that staff rotation broadens administrative experience, strengthens cross-agency collaboration, and develops capable managerial leaders. This approach is relevant for Vietnam, where inter-agency coordination is increasingly important. However, rotation must be purposeful, well-planned, and aligned with employees' competencies and career paths. In addition, Singapore's emphasis on strict discipline highlights the importance of integrity and accountability in public administration. Vietnam should continue building transparent, fair, and rigorous accountability mechanisms to reinforce public trust and enhance the effectiveness of the governmental apparatus.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The experiences of Singapore, the UK, and Japan demonstrate that developing human resources in the public sector is a decisive factor for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration. Although each country adopts different approaches, they share a common objective: building a competent, professional civil service capable of meeting the demands of modern governance. The comparative figure highlights Singapore's comprehensive advantages, including merit-based recruitment, objective performance evaluation, competitive compensation, and a well-structured training system. The UK stands out with clearly defined competency frameworks and periodic performance assessments, while Japan maintains stability and long-term commitment through its career-based civil service system combined with staff rotation.

These lessons indicate that Vietnam must approach public sector HRD from a holistic, systematic, and long-term perspective. Despite recent reform efforts — such as implementing job-position schemes, improving training programs, and advancing salary reform — the actual outcomes remain limited. Recruitment mechanisms still lack competitiveness, performance evaluation systems are insufficiently objective, salary policies do not adequately attract or retain talent, and training practices remain overly formalistic. These shortcomings underline the need for Vietnam to further modernize its public personnel management system, ensuring greater transparency, efficiency, and alignment with international standards.

From that reality, the study proposes some recommendations for Vietnam in the process of implementing human resource development policies in the public sector.

From the above analysis, to improve the quality of human resources in the public sector in

the context of innovation and integration, Vietnam needs to implement the following recommendations:

- Enhance merit-based recruitment through competency frameworks, ensuring that the right individuals are selected for the right positions while improving transparency and competitiveness in the recruitment process.

- Reform performance appraisal systems, shifting from qualitative to quantitative assessments, emphasizing work outcomes, and linking evaluation results directly to promotion, training, and rewards.

- Advance salary and compensation reform based on job positions, increasing the competitiveness of the public sector, and establishing performance-based bonuses and benefits to motivate greater productivity.

- Strengthen training and professional development, prioritizing practical, needs-based training, workplace learning, online learning, and competency-aligned skill development.

- Improve staff rotation and public service discipline, ensuring fairness and transparency while promoting accountability and professionalism within the civil service.

In summary, developing Vietnam's public sector human resources requires comprehensive, coordinated strategies that integrate domestic reform priorities with international best practices in modern public management.

The limitation of the paper is that it is focused on the changes in HRD in public sectors, with the rules and regulation as controlled factors but does not analyse the internal factors of the officials that affect the HRD procedure in public sectors.

Future research would then focus on specific policies applied for HRD in public sectors within the context of digitalization and promoting e-government in state management, this lead to the importance of developing the abilities and flexibility of officials to match the state's requirements.

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