



## BUILDING A PUBLIC SERVICE CULTURE FOR OFFICIALS AND CIVIL SERVANTS IN THÁI NGUYÊN PROVINCE IN THE LIGHT OF THE 1943 TREATISE ON VIETNAMESE CULTURE

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### Abstract:

Building a public service culture within state administrative agencies will contribute to creating an environment where each official and civil servant continuously learns and improves, deserving to be public servants who respect and serve the public for their benefit. Through this process, a close relationship is established between state administrative agencies and the public, showcasing the cultural beauty of a civilized and modern administration.

**Keywords:** civil service culture, civil servants, 1943 Treatise on Vietnamese culture

### 1. Introduction

The 1943 Treatise on Vietnamese Culture is considered a manifesto, the first platform of the Communist Party of Vietnam concerning culture. It played a guiding role in shaping the awareness and operational principles of cultural and artistic activities for the entire Party and the people, serving as a beacon illuminating modern Vietnamese culture. Throughout various revolutionary periods, our Party has consistently emphasized the vital role of culture, considering it the spiritual foundation as well as a significant goal and driving force in the process of national development.

The 9th Conference of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party issued Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW on June 9, 2014, regarding the construction and development of Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development. The resolution clearly stated the need to "*focus on nurturing the development of culture within the Party, state agencies, and mass organizations, considering this a crucial factor in building a clean and strong political system. The emphasis is on cultivating a cadre of officials, Party members, civil servants, and public employees who possess ethical qualities, are*

*dedicated, wholeheartedly serve the nation and the people, maintain a close bond with the populace; uphold the rule of law, balance democracy with discipline and order; and link personal freedom with social responsibility and civic duty."* <sup>(1)</sup>

## 2. Results

Recognizing the important role of building a civil service culture for the sustainable development of the country and implementing the Party's guidelines and the State's laws, Thai Nguyen province has rigorously directed the implementation of regulations on the construction of a civil service culture. The People's Committee of Thai Nguyen province has issued numerous directives and thoroughly enforced regulations concerning civil service culture, such as:

- Directive No. 20/CT-UBND dated September 9, 2016, on forms and measures to strengthen administrative discipline and order in agencies and units; Official Letter No. 98/UBND-NC dated January 10, 2019, directing the strict implementation of regulations on civil service culture; Plan No. 107/KH-UBND dated July 30, 2019, on organizing the emulation movement "Officials, civil servants, and public employees emulating the implementation of office culture" for the period 2019 – 2025; Official Letter No. 5907/UBND-NC dated November 24, 2022, on strengthening discipline and administrative order in the performance of duties by officials, civil servants, and public employees; Directive No. 08/CT-UBND dated April 20, 2023, on improving the quality of advisory work for the Provincial People's Committee and the Chairman of the Provincial People's Committee;
- The administrative reform program for the period 2021 – 2025; the annual administrative reform plan and the annual civil service inspection plan with a focus on unannounced inspections of the performance of duties by officials, civil servants, and public employees in agencies, units, and localities.

Through inspections, timely corrections were made to the attitude of service and guidance provided to the people and organizations, all of which contributed to the enhancement of the level of satisfaction with the services of state agencies.

The 2022 results of the Satisfaction Index of Public Administration Services (SIPAS) <sup>(2)</sup> for Thai Nguyen province indicate that 86.26% of respondents were satisfied with the administrative services of the province. Thai Nguyen ranked 2nd out of 63 provinces and cities and 1st among the 14 provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region, marking an improvement of 9 ranks compared to 2021.

A deeper analysis of the criteria evaluating public service and the competence of the team of officials, civil servants, and public employees reveals that 99.79% of surveyed citizens indicated that there were no situations where civil servants caused inconvenience or harassment when handling their tasks. Additionally, 99.79% of the surveyed citizens stated that there were no instances where they had to pay unofficial fees to civil servants

for their work to be processed. Civil servants were perceived to have a courteous, proper, enthusiastic, and dedicated attitude.

The citizen satisfaction level with civil servants in the province is 86.14%, ranking 3rd out of 63 provinces and cities. The results indicate that the team of civil servants has shown significant improvement, enhanced awareness, and exhibited a spirit of responsibility. They have demonstrated courteous and respectful communication with the public, serving the people by specifically providing timely and complete information, promptly and adequately answering citizens' questions and opinions, guiding citizens through the documentation process clearly and ensuring that citizens can complete their paperwork after a single instruction; adhering strictly to regulations in handling citizens' matters, and being diligent in resolving issues.

The work of propagating, disseminating, and thoroughly implementing the contents of office culture to each official, civil servant, and public employee is carried out regularly and through various forms such as: information and propaganda on the Provincial Radio and Television Station, Thai Nguyen Newspaper, electronic information portals of the province, departments, agencies, and sectors, and on the information and communication systems of localities. Emphasis is placed on integrating the promotion and education of civil service culture into the training and development programs for officials, civil servants, and public employees. Many agencies, units, and localities incorporate the content of civil service culture into specialized propaganda topics on administrative reform using various forms such as showcasing exemplary models, organizing competitions, etc. As a result, the team of officials, civil servants, and public employees' awareness of the significance and importance of building a civil service culture and adhering to regulations on civil service culture has been enhanced.

Agencies, localities, and units have proactively incorporated the implementation of civil service culture as one of the criteria for emulation, linking it with the execution of professional tasks and the implementation of resolutions and patriotic emulation movements. Additionally, they have issued and strictly enforced working regulations, office culture regulations, and behavioral standards for civil servants, public employees, and workers, clearly specifying principles of work, responsibility regimes, work relations, and the methods and processes for handling tasks. This creates a legal basis for managing, addressing, and promptly preventing violations of civil service culture. There is also a continuous effort to study and amend internal rules and working regulations to align with the characteristics, functions, and tasks of each agency, ensuring compliance with regulations on civil service culture.

The content of civil service regime reform, building, and improving the quality of the team of officials, civil servants, and public employees aims to establish a democratic, professional, modern, streamlined, effective, and efficient administrative system capable of development, integrity, and serving the people. This is one of the key tasks directed by the comprehensive state administrative reform program for the 2021-2030 period. Agencies and units are accelerating administrative reform, vigorously applying information technology, and promoting digital transformation in office operations. The

working styles and methods in agencies and units have been renewed to ensure transparency, uniformity, and effectiveness. To date, agencies, localities, and units have applied information technology in the reception and processing of documents, organized meetings either directly or online, and used information technology in public service activities to ensure smooth management, direction, and administration. They have made hotlines and email addresses public to receive and handle complaints, denunciations, and reflections on acts of harassment and causing inconvenience to the people and businesses in the handling of tasks by officials, civil servants, and public employees. Additionally, citizens can provide feedback through the C-Thái Nguyên application, enabling the relevant authorities to promptly receive and coordinate resolutions according to regulations. Violations and manifestations of harassment and inconvenience in dealing with people and businesses are strictly addressed.

The management, utilization, and evaluation of officials, civil servants, and public employees are conducted with strict adherence to legal regulations, ensuring thoroughness and precision. The functions, duties, responsibilities, and authorities of agencies, units, and individual officials are clearly delineated. Emphasis is placed on the leadership's role in directing the execution of professional tasks and rigorously enforcing administrative discipline, order, and ethical standards in public service. Inspections of disciplinary and administrative orders, along with civil service culture checks, have been intensified and integrated into scheduled inspection programs. These include administrative reform inspections, unannounced thematic inspections of public service, and inspections of the implementation of tasks, conclusions, and directives issued by the leadership of the Provincial People's Committee. Through these inspections, timely corrections, reminders, and disciplinary actions have been applied to officials, civil servants, and public employees found in violation. Disciplinary measures are imposed according to the regulations, based on the nature and severity of the infractions.

The directive to enhance administrative discipline and order has significantly expedited progress and improved the quality and efficiency of task resolution across various domains, mitigating delays and inconveniences faced by citizens and businesses. The work ethic, communication, and conduct of officials and civil servants have markedly improved; the majority uphold strong ethical standards, demonstrate exemplary behavior, and promote internal unity. They adhere to working hours, comply strictly with the internal regulations and rules of their agencies and units, proactively coordinate in performing their duties, exhibit high responsibility, and maintain a methodical approach to their work. They were diligent and exemplary in fulfilling their assigned responsibilities and tasks. In interactions with citizens and in collaborative and supportive relationships with colleagues, officials and civil servants consistently maintain a courteous and amicable demeanour, providing comprehensive guidance on procedural matters and detailed explanations to citizens' inquiries. They avoid forming factions that could disrupt the internal cohesion of their agencies or units. Concerning communications with superiors, officials, civil servants, and public employees, they must adhere to the administrative hierarchy, comply with directives, and accept management

and task assignments from higher authorities. Those in leadership and management positions avoid arbitrary, autocratic, or conservative behavior; instead, they show respect for and consider the opinions of their subordinates, setting an example in their communication and conduct.

Many agencies have placed suggestion boxes at reception and results delivery sections and publicly listed phone numbers for citizens and businesses to provide feedback and make recommendations regarding the service attitude of officials, civil servants, and public employees. The working premises are progressively being developed to be more civilized, courteous, and modern. Numerous government offices have been newly built, renovated, and upgraded to be spacious and provide a good working environment. Many ministries, sectors, and localities are intensifying investments in upgrading technical infrastructure and implementing the development of various software and foundational databases to support the construction and development of e-government.

The implementation of various initiatives aimed at building and enhancing the culture of public service has yielded numerous positive results, receiving high praise from the Government. Specifically, this is reflected in the improved rankings of Thai Nguyen province's Public Administration Reform Index from 2018 to the present <sup>(3)</sup>: ranked 18th in 2018, 14th in 2019, 12th in 2020, 6th in 2021, and 9th out of 63 centrally governed provinces and cities in 2022. The Satisfaction Index of Public Administrative Services in 2022 ranked 2nd out of 63 provinces and cities. The Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index consistently ranks in the high-medium group, with 2020 being in the highest group nationwide. The Provincial Competitiveness Index has also improved over the years.

It can be affirmed that the values of civil service culture have progressively disseminated and exerted a profound and extensive impact on the awareness and actions of agencies and their officials, civil servants, and public employees in the execution of their duties. The development of civil service culture has been closely integrated with state administrative reform and civil service regime reform, thereby increasingly fulfilling the requirements of the citizenry, society, and the nation's development.

### **3. Limitations**

Alongside the commendable achievements, there remain certain limitations concerning civil service culture, such as: inconsistent adherence to administrative discipline and order by some officials, civil servants, and public employees; a lack of self-discipline and professional development among a few officials, civil servants, and public employees, leading to legal violations and subsequent disciplinary actions, including prosecution and imprisonment. The effectiveness of the civil service culture emulation movement in some agencies, units, and localities has not been maximized. Moreover, the frequency and rigor of monitoring and supervising the implementation of civil service culture regulations in certain agencies, units, and localities are inadequate. There is also a lack of

focus on cultivating exemplary role models within the cadre of officials, civil servants, and public employees.

These limitations can be attributed to several factors, including insufficient awareness among a minority of officials, civil servants, and public employees regarding the significance and importance of building a civil service culture, as well as their roles and responsibilities in complying with public service regulations in general and civil service culture regulations in particular. The oversight and encouragement of task execution within some agencies and units have not been given due attention; the accountability of leaders, especially those in subordinate units, has not been sufficiently highlighted. Furthermore, the emulation and commendation activities within some agencies, units, and localities have been slow to innovate, failing to promptly motivate officials, civil servants, and public employees.

#### 4. Solutions

The Resolution of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party has explicitly outlined the development orientation for the period 2021-2030, which includes: *“Developing well-rounded individuals and fostering an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity, thereby enabling culture to truly become an endogenous strength and a driving force for national development and the safeguarding of the Fatherland”* <sup>(3)</sup>; *“Building and perfecting a socialist rule-of-law state that is clean, strong, streamlined, effective, and efficient, dedicated to serving the people and fostering the country’s development. Enhancing transparency and accountability; exercising stringent control over power, closely associated with reinforcing discipline and order in the operations of the State and among officials, civil servants, and public employees.”*

In response to the increasingly demanding requirements of the current phase, and to contribute to the successful implementation of the Resolution of the 13th National Congress of the Party, it is imperative that all levels and sectors concentrate on the following key tasks:

- Consistently and comprehensively implementing civil service culture and administrative discipline regulations: It is essential to thoroughly and extensively instill in the entire cadre of officials, civil servants, and public employees the necessity of rigorously implementing regulations on civil service culture and administrative discipline. This will create a substantial transformation in awareness and actions, establishing civil service culture as a vital endogenous strength of a professional, responsible administration dedicated to serving the people and meeting the new situational requirements. Continuous propaganda and enhancement of awareness regarding civil service culture among officials and civil servants should be emphasized, with a focus on ethics education, lifestyle cultivation, personality development, and the training of attitudes and behaviors according to prescribed standards. This aims to build a team of officials and civil

servants who respect and are devoted to serving the people, embodying the role of the "servants" of the people.

- Promoting the study and emulation of Ho Chi Minh's ideology, ethics, and style: Efforts should be intensified to actively implement the Civil Service Culture Project, promote emulation movements among officials, civil servants, and public employees in practicing office culture, and expand exemplary models and effective practices in public service execution and the development of civil service culture. Creating a favorable environment and conditions for officials, civil servants, and public employees to exchange and share effective solutions and practices in task implementation is crucial.
- Review and amend regulations on civil service culture: Departments, agencies, units, and localities should review and amend regulations related to civil service culture within their jurisdiction to ensure alignment with their functions, tasks, and actual conditions. They should provide advice and propose initiatives, strive for administrative reform, build professional conduct and working styles, cultivate public service ethics, enhance responsibility, and promote the spirit of speaking up, thinking critically, and taking action for the common good within their respective agencies, units, and localities. Ensuring administrative discipline and order and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public service execution are paramount.
- Enhance the quality of the cadre of officials, civil servants, and public employees: Continuously improve the quality of the cadre of officials, civil servants, and public employees by effectively managing their recruitment, evaluation, planning, training, development, placement, utilization, commendation, discipline, and implementation of policies in accordance with legal regulations.
- Enhance administrative discipline and order: Emphasize the improvement of administrative discipline and order in conjunction with strengthening the inspection and supervision of implementation. Regularly conduct planned or unannounced inspections to ensure adherence to administrative discipline and order within agencies, units, and localities. Promptly identify, correct, and strictly handle violations while also recognizing and commending exemplary collectives and individuals to expand, reward, and timely motivate positive achievements.
- Elevate the role and responsibility of leaders in promoting civil service culture. Enhance the role and responsibility of leaders in the construction and implementation of civil service culture. Leaders must be accountable for directing the rectification of working styles, reinforcing discipline and order, and improving the quality of advisory work to ensure the effective execution of assigned tasks within their agencies and under their management authority.
- Implement administrative reform program effectively: Agencies, units, and localities must focus on decisively and effectively implementing the Administrative Reform Program. This includes vigorously applying information technology and digital technology in state management activities and shifting

from a "government management" mindset to a "government service" approach. Emphasis should be placed on professional training, practical experience enhancement, and improving the work ethic of officials and civil servants to meet task requirements. Efforts should be made to improve the efficiency of online public service delivery and to strongly innovate the one-stop-shop and inter-agency mechanism, aiming to enhance service quality, reduce travel time and costs, and facilitate convenience for citizens and businesses. There should be an emphasis on decentralization in administrative procedure resolution, ensuring that the closest level to the grassroots and the people handles tasks, adhering to sectoral and territorial management principles. This approach will avoid multiple administrative layers, prolonged resolution times, and inconvenience to citizens.

Citizens should be placed at the center, with their satisfaction as the goal of service and the measure of the quality and effectiveness of administrative agencies at all levels. Strive to ensure that the Public Administration Reform Index (PAR INDEX), the Satisfaction Index of Public Administrative Services (SIPAS), and the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) of Thai Nguyen province are among the best in the country.

## 5. Conclusion

Building a civil service culture is a crucial task with immense significance in reforming the state administration towards professionalism, modernity, efficiency, integrity, and service to the people. The objective of establishing a civil service culture is to ensure administrative discipline, order, and the effective functioning of agencies and units. It aims to develop a cadre of officials, civil servants, and public employees who are loyal to the State, uphold the honor and interests of the nation, and are dedicated to serving the people. This is a vital factor in advancing administrative reform and in building and perfecting the socialist rule-of-law state of Vietnam.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

We declare no conflicts of interest.

### About the Author(s)

**Nguyen Thi Lan Anh** is a distinguished member of the academic community at Thai Nguyen University in Thai Nguyen, Vietnam. With an impressive teaching career spanning over 15 years, she is recognized as a dedicated foreign language lecturer at the institution. Alongside her teaching accomplishments, Nguyen Thi Lan Anh boasts over nine years of expertise in the realm of educational management.

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