



**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CIVIL SERVANTS
AND STATE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS
OF VIETNAM'S SEAS AND ISLANDS**

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Abstract:

Vietnam's seas and islands greatly influence political and legal life for national, regional, and international development in history, present, and future. The article analyzes the need and importance of capacity building for civil servants and state management organizations on seas and islands in the context of developing the marine economy and protecting Vietnam's sea and island sovereignty. With a long coastline and a rich island system, Vietnam is facing many challenges from resource exploitation, and climate change to national security and defense issues. The article discusses the current status of the sea and island management capacity of civil servants, officials, and related organizations, including limitations in expertise, management skills, and the ability to respond to complex situations. The article also proposes strategic solutions to improve management capacity through training, professional development, enhanced international cooperation, and application of modern technology in sea and island management. The article emphasizes that improving the capacity of civil servants and state management organizations is the key to effectively implementing policies for

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sustainable marine economic development and protecting national maritime interests, making an important contribution to the comprehensive development of Vietnam.

Keywords: sea, island, civil servant, state management, Vietnam

1. Introduction

Vietnam is a coastal country with more than 3,260 km of coastline and thousands of large and small islands. The sea and islands not only play an important role in terms of geography but are also abundant natural resources, contributing significantly to the country's socio-economic development, environmental protection, and national security and defense (Nguyen, 2020). However, with the rapid and complex development of marine economic activities, the management, protection, and sustainable exploitation of marine and island resources are becoming increasingly urgent.

In this context, improving the capacity of civil servants and state management organizations on seas and islands is an important factor, in ensuring the effective implementation of policies and laws on seas and islands (Pham, 2022). This article focuses on analyzing the current situation, challenges as well as recommendations to improve the professional capacity, management, and operation of civil servants, while enhancing the operational efficiency of agencies and organizations related to Vietnam's seas and islands. Capacity building not only contributes to protecting the sovereignty of seas and islands but also promotes the sustainable development of the country's marine economy in the future (Anh, 2006). Currently, in the face of changes in the regional and international context, Vietnam is facing many challenges in protecting its sovereignty over seas and islands, exploiting marine resources sustainably, and responding to climate change. The growing development of marine economic activities such as oil and gas exploitation, fishing, and marine tourism, along with environmental issues and political fluctuations, has created great pressure on state management of seas and islands.

To address these challenges, one of the urgent requirements is to build and develop a team of civil servants and managers with extensive knowledge, high professional capacity, and effective management skills. This team not only needs to understand the legal regulations related to sea and island management but also must master national strategies on marine economic development, environmental protection, and resource management. In addition, inter-sectoral, inter-regional, and international cooperation also requires civil servants to be able to quickly adapt to changes in the working environment, and access and apply modern technologies and management methods (Hall, 2017). The study has presented specific contents and solutions to improve the capacity of civil servants and state management organizations on Vietnam's sea and island. This not only helps to enhance the ability to perform state management tasks but also contributes significantly to protecting national rights and interests at sea and promoting sustainable marine economic development (Ca, 2018).

State management of seas and islands is the management of state agencies through legal institutions, institutions, and people to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of inter-sectoral and inter-regional coordination between state agencies from the central to local levels. Participation in the process of planning, organizing the implementation of strategies, plans, plans for the use and exploitation, and protection of marine resources and the environment must be consistent with the orientation and requirements of sustainable development, while firmly protecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). State management of seas and islands has a very broad and diverse content, both comprehensive management and sectoral and specialized management related to the scope of state management of most sectors and fields. State management capacity of seas and islands is determined through many groups of relationships, adaptability, and development. With this approach, to improve the effectiveness of state management of seas and islands, it is necessary to focus on improving comprehensive management capacity, focusing on institutional capacity, creative capacity, and action capacity to turn goals into actions, expectations into results, and people's expectations into satisfaction and trust (Department of Water Resources and Sea and Island Management, 2020).

2. Methodology

To achieve the research objectives set out in the article, the research method uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, with specific approaches.

The method of collecting documents includes collecting secondary documents, researching using secondary documents including legal documents, reports of the Government, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Vietnam Administration of Seas and Islands, and domestic and foreign scientific research documents on sea and island management. These documents provide theoretical and practical bases on the role, challenges, and capacity-building needs of civil servants and state management organizations. Collecting primary documents, data from surveys, and interviews with experts, managers, and civil servants related to the field of sea and island management. This is the basis for assessing current capacity and identifying specific training and capacity development needs.

The study surveyed civil servants in state agencies managing seas and islands, including the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Departments of Natural Resources and Environment of coastal provinces, and other relevant agencies. The questions in the survey focused on assessing professional capacity, management skills, and ability to respond to challenges in the field of sea and island management.

Interviews with experts and leaders with experience in sea and island management were conducted to collect in-depth opinions on specific solutions to improve management capacity, as well as factors affecting the effectiveness of implementing policies and strategies for sea and island management.

The study also used an international comparison method, evaluating experiences from countries with similar conditions in seas and islands. This analysis helps identify useful lessons that can be applied to Vietnam in improving sea and island management capacity.

Based on the analysis results, the study will propose specific solutions for training, professional capacity development, and application of modern technology in sea and island management. These solutions will be developed based on practical needs and the specific conditions of Vietnam, aiming to improve the capacity of civil servants and improve the operational efficiency of state management organizations. The above research method ensures scientific, objective, and comprehensive analysis, evaluation, and proposal of solutions to improve the capacity of civil servants and state management organizations of Vietnam's sea and islands.

3. Current status of organizational structure and civil servants performing state management work on seas and islands in Vietnam

3.1. Organization of state management apparatus for sea and islands in Vietnam

The organization of the state management apparatus for seas and islands in our country has been completed through stages. Before 1998, there was no specialized management apparatus for seas and islands, the general management responsibility was carried out by the Government. Issues related to seas and islands were managed by ministries and branches, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of National Defense. These ministries assist the Government in management. In localities with seas and islands, specialized agencies at the provincial and district levels have not been established to assist the People's Committees at the same level in performing the function of state management of seas and islands. Therefore, the effectiveness of state management of seas and islands has not been guaranteed (Quy & Thao, 2019).

To meet the requirements of state management of seas and islands in Vietnam, the Coast Guard was established; the Coast Guard is a specialized force of the State, performing the function of managing security, order, and safety and ensuring compliance with Vietnamese laws and relevant international treaties to which Vietnam is a member in the seas and continental shelf of Vietnam (Hanoi National University, 2021). However, the nature and scope of activities of the Coast Guard Department have their characteristics, which are associated with the professional nature of the police. However, they have not fully covered the contents of state management of seas and islands.

The Resolution of the 4th Central Conference of the 10th tenure sets out the requirement to build an effective and unified comprehensive state management agency for the sea to overcome the limitations of state management of the sea and islands by sector. The Government issued Decree No. 25/2008/ND-CP stipulating the functions, tasks, powers, and organizational structure of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; in which the General Department of Vietnam Seas and Islands was

established with the function of advising and assisting the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment in comprehensive and unified state management of the sea and islands. The Prime Minister issued Decision No. 116/2008/QĐ-TTg, stipulating the functions, tasks, powers, and organizational structure of the Vietnam General Department of Seas and Islands. The establishment of a comprehensive and unified state management agency for seas and islands is of particular importance in state management of seas and islands. In 28 provinces and centrally-run cities with seas, 22 Sea and Island Sub-Departments have been established in the provinces, the rest are Sea and Island Offices. However, in some provinces, the state management agency for seas and islands is merged into other specialized agencies.

In general, the inter-sectoral and inter-regional nature of state management of seas and islands means that state management of seas and islands is still relatively fragmented in terms of authority and state management areas. The seas and islands are managed by many ministries, sectors, and localities, with aspects including.

The state management agency for agriculture and fisheries stipulates that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development performs the function of state management of sectors and fields, including agriculture, forestry, salt production, fisheries, and irrigation in sea, coastal, and island areas.

The state management agency for minerals and petroleum includes the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, which performs the state management of minerals; the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which performs the state management function of industry and trade in the fields of oil and gas, mining and mineral processing; the Ministry of Construction, which performs the state management function of construction materials.

The state management agency for maritime transport includes the Ministry of Transport as the transport management agency, in which maritime transport has the direct participation of the Vietnam Maritime Administration, the Inland Waterways Administration, the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam, and the Registry.

The state management agency for maritime tourism includes the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, which presides over and coordinates with state agencies in the state management of maritime and island tourism.

The state management agency for diplomacy and national territorial borders that is not decentralized to local authorities includes the National Border Committee under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has the function of managing national borders and territories (developing and directing the implementation of strategies and policies on national maritime borders, demarcating and planting border markers, managing border markers, negotiating, signing and organizing the implementation of international treaties related to national territorial borders at sea).

The State management agency for national defense at sea includes the forces of the Ministry of National Defense, which play a core role in law enforcement and defense in the sea and island border areas. The units of the Ministry of National Defense have important tasks related to the State management of national defense at sea, including

general management of combat operations, in which the direct combat forces are the naval, air force, border guard, coast guard, and search and rescue units (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2015).

The state Management agency for maritime and coastal security, including the Ministry of Public Security, is the state management agency for security, order, and social safety nationwide.

The current state management agencies for seas and islands are scattered. The current fragmentation in the organization of the state management apparatus for seas and islands shows limitations. Firstly, there is a lack of unity in the process of planning and organizing the implementation of strategies, plans, plans for the use and exploitation, and protection of marine and island resources and environment to ensure the requirements of sustainable development, while firmly protecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Secondly, the failure to promote overall resources in state management of seas and islands directly affects the effectiveness and efficiency of state management of seas and islands. Third, there is a lack of coordination mechanism in state management of seas and islands, the forms of coordination are not diverse, and there is a lack of initiative in inter-sectoral and inter-regional coordination activities in state management of seas and islands. Fourth, it hurts the effective use of the capacity of cadres and civil servants doing this work, in the condition that the cadres and civil servants in state management of seas and islands are still lacking and weak in both quantity and quality (National Academy of Public Administration, 2021).

3.2. Capacity of civil servants in charge of state management of seas and islands

The capacity of state management of seas and islands depends directly on the staff and civil servants, but currently, this staff is limited in both quantity and quality. The number of staff of the General Department of Seas and Islands of Vietnam is insufficient compared to the requirements of the task. At the local level, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment has an average staff of about 07 civil servants monitoring this field. At the district and commune levels, there are no civil servants specializing in the field of seas and islands. At the general management department of seas and islands under the Department of Natural Resources and Environment of coastal provinces and civil servants of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment of coastal districts and island districts, the number of civil servants trained in the field of seas is still small, mainly civil servants working part-time. At some Departments of Natural Resources and Environment, the Provincial People's Committee has transferred a small number of civil servants working in fisheries to strengthen.

The number of civil servants working on seas and islands in localities is not stable. Many places have to hold other positions related to their trained expertise concurrently. The team of civil servants working on state management of seas and islands is facing limitations.

Firstly, the majority have not been trained in the right field. At the General Department of Seas and Islands, the team with in-depth expertise in seas and islands

accounts for only about 1/5 of the number of civil servants. In localities, the team of civil servants managing state management of seas and islands is still weak in terms of expertise, knowledge, and state management skills, because most of them have accumulated practical experience without being properly trained.

Secondly, there is a lack of knowledge and skills in comprehensive and unified state management of seas and islands. Civil servants in charge of state management of seas and islands in contents such as multi-sectoral coordination; cooperation between coastal localities; and marine space management are still limited.

Third, there is still an imbalance between the central and local levels, and between state management agencies related to the sea and islands. Training, fostering, and developing human resources for state management of the sea and islands still face many difficulties. New training and fostering programs have been developed. Training and fostering human resources for the sea and islands focuses mainly on the fields of aquaculture, exploitation, seafood processing, marine hydrometeorology, ship engineering, marine construction engineering, marine transportation, and oceanography. Training programs related to the marine environment, marine ecology, geology, geophysics, marine minerals, marine management, marine economic development planning, and marine law have not been developed. The training and fostering of civil servants specializing in the sea and islands still has many limitations, and there is a shortage of lecturers and experts with in-depth knowledge in this field (Ngai, 2020).

4.2. Some solutions to build organizational structure, improve state management capacity of sea and islands

Firstly, improving the institutional capacity of state management of seas and islands. Improving institutional capacity needs to be focused on all three levels, including the capacity of civil servants; the capacity of state management agencies, and the system of state management agencies of seas and islands. Creating an institutional framework suitable for the requirements of state management of seas and islands in each period, with the ability to forecast and propose effective response scenarios to changes in state management of seas and islands. The institutional capacity of state management agencies of seas and islands is an important premise for perfecting the state management institution of seas and islands, aiming to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of management in this field (Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2013).

Second, improve the organization of the state management apparatus for seas and islands at the central and local levels. In localities, it is necessary to overcome the situation of integrating state management agencies for seas and islands into other agencies, leading to the dispersion of state management efforts (Hardesty & Wilcox, 2015). It is necessary to strengthen the inter-sectoral and inter-local coordination mechanism in state management of seas and islands, overcome the situation of regional planning being affected by sectoral planning, and the dispersion in the development and implementation of strategies and plans for seas and islands. Strengthen the coordination mechanism through the formation of working groups and teams, through the development of plans,

plans, and state management documents, and overcome the separation between localities with seas and islands in state management (Thang, 2017).

Third, improve the quality of civil servants in state management of seas and islands. In the long term, it is necessary to pay attention to the issue of creating human resources for state management of seas and islands, through orienting public opinion and creating career opportunities in the field of state management of seas and islands. In the short term, it is necessary to focus on training in state management of seas and islands for civil servants, including retraining, short-term training to update professional knowledge on an annual basis; long-term postgraduate training in an in-depth direction for leading experts in the field of seas and islands; training and fostering to standardize basic knowledge of state management, economics, engineering, science and technology, political theory, national defense, and security; training and fostering skills in scientific research, marine technology, solving macro-level issues related to the sea (Tran, 2018).

Fourth, establish a mechanism and improve the effectiveness of applying the integrated management method for seas and islands. The integration in the management of marine and island resources is demonstrated in three aspects: systemic integration: each sea area is considered a unified resource system, managed in a way that does not cut, divide, or consider components separately to ensure integrity.

Consider the sea area as an interactive system between nature and society, between biological and non-biological factors; Functional integration: each sea area is a multi-functional system, which needs to be considered for use by those functions and within the load-bearing limits of the system and sub-system in the area; Integration in management methods: vertical (levels) and horizontal (stakeholders) management methods to ensure multi-sectoral and multi-level nature.

The government should have a mechanism to closely link management policies and management actions (Pomeroy, 2016). Comprehensive management of marine and island resources with the motto of not replacing sectoral and field management but playing the role of guiding and coordinating sectoral and field management activities; overcoming conflicts and contradictions in sectoral and field management; rationally and effectively using resources, protecting the environment and marine and island ecosystems; unifying marine and island resource and environment management activities from the central to local levels, ensuring sustainable development of the sea and islands (Vietnam General Department of Seas and Islands, 2021).

Fifth, investing in infrastructure, science, and technology to serve state management of seas and islands. In the current period, it is necessary to pay special attention to in-depth and focused investment in technological equipment, improving the capacity of equipment and technology to serve basic investigation, survey, control, exploration, and research of seas, islands, and oceans to effectively serve state management.

Sixth, community participation in state management of seas and islands should be enhanced through the community carrying out state management activities and community-based management and building livelihoods for communities in sea and

island areas. This will ensure that institutions and policies on seas and islands are put into practice, both ensuring the requirements of socio-economic development and meeting the requirements of protecting sovereignty at sea (Nguyen, 2021).

Seventh, improve the effectiveness of international cooperation in resolving sea and island issues. International cooperation activities aim to learn about state management experiences on seas and islands, effectively exploit the advantages of seas and islands to both ensure the requirements of protecting sovereignty and meeting the requirements of national development, creating position and strength for national development, increasing the influence of the country on regional and international life.

5. Conclusion

In the context of Vietnam's increasing development and international integration, the effective management of marine resources and the protection of island sovereignty are extremely important and urgent tasks. To achieve this goal, improving the capacity of civil servants and state management organizations on seas and islands is a core factor. Through analyzing the current situation and challenges in sea and island management, the article has pointed out that there needs to be a strong change in the method of training and fostering cadres, and at the same time, it is necessary to apply modern technology and international experience to management work.

Proposed solutions for sustainable development of the marine economy and exploitation of marine resources; reviewing and perfecting the system of marine policies towards sustainable development, ensuring feasibility, synchronization, unity, and conformity with legal standards and practical conditions; creating a favorable legal corridor to mobilize domestic and foreign resources for investment in infrastructure construction, development of science, technology, human resources and transfer of knowledge about the sea; continuing to improve and innovate the organization and effective operation of the integrated and unified management organization of the sea; strengthening the material facilities and capacity for integrated and unified State management of the sea and islands. This will contribute significantly to protecting national interests at sea, while promoting the development of the marine economy, creating a premise for the comprehensive development of the country.

In general, investing in improving the capacity of sea and island management is not only the responsibility of state management agencies but also a strategic investment for the future sustainable development of Vietnam, ensuring national rights and interests in the context of globalization and rapid changes in the international environment.

Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the conception and writing of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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