IMPLEMENTING ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE REFORM FOR PEOPLE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN VIETNAM

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Abstract:

The article focuses on analyzing the implementation of administrative procedure reform in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam, an urgent topic in modernizing public administration and building a digital government. Based on a synthesis of international theory and research, the article examines the relationship between administrative procedure reform and digital transformation through policy analysis, statistical data, and case studies at several ministries, branches, and localities in Vietnam. The research results show that digital transformation has contributed to streamlining administrative procedures, reducing costs and processing time, increasing transparency, and improving people's satisfaction. Initiatives such as the National Public Service Portal, the Population Database, and Vietnam Electronic Identification are important steps in the digitization of administrative procedures. However, the study points out some limitations, including the disparity in digital infrastructure between regions, limited digital capacity of civil servants, and an incomplete legal framework for protecting personal data. Comparison with international models from Singapore and South Korea shows that Vietnam should

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focus on synchronizing data infrastructure, improving security, and putting people at the center. The article proposes solutions and policy recommendations to accelerate the process of administrative procedure reform and develop digital government by 2030.

Keywords: administrative procedure reform, digital transformation, digital government, online public services, public administration

1. Introduction

In the fourth industrial revolution, digital transformation (DT) has become an inevitable trend for every country to improve the efficiency of state management, increase transparency, and improve the quality of service to the people. Vietnam, with the vision of building a digital government, digital economy, and digital society, has considered administrative procedure reform (APR) as the focus of the process of modernizing public administration. The APR is a key component in the overall program of state administrative reform for the period 2021-2030, when combined with digital technology, helping to streamline processes, reduce time and costs for people, and increase satisfaction and trust in the public apparatus (Hai, 2026; Pham, 2023).

Many international studies have shown that the digitalization of public services, the application of e-government platforms, and digital government can fundamentally change the way the state and citizens interact, creating transparent, fast, and effective public services (Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020; Erh, 2023). In Vietnam, the combination of APR and DT is demonstrated through the National Public Service Portal (www.dichvucong.gov.vn), the National Population Database, and online public services. The integration of digital data and the implementation of the electronic "one-stop" mechanism have contributed to reducing corruption and improving transparency in handling administrative records for people and businesses (Doan *et al.*, 2025).

The post-COVID-19 pandemic context highlights the urgent need for digital transformation and administrative procedure reform, as administrative activities must quickly adapt to online working conditions and the need to access public services remotely (Mai *et al.*, 2024). The deployment of online public services and the digitalization of management processes have become strategic solutions to ensure the continuity of public operations and create a solid foundation for future digital governance (Cuong & Le, 2024).

Despite many outstanding results, the APR associated with digital transformation in Vietnam still has certain limitations. Some online public services have not fully met the requirements of friendliness and ease of use; the gap in digital infrastructure between localities and the level of digital readiness of civil servants is still uneven (Chuc & Anh, 2023). In addition, the legal and policy framework related to data security, digital identification, and citizen information management is still in the process of completion (Do Thi *et al.*, 2024). This poses a challenge for Vietnam in ensuring the effectiveness and

sustainability of administrative procedure reform when entering the stage of accelerating digital transformation (Painter, 2003).

This article aims to analyze the current status of APR reform implementation for people in the digital transformation process in Vietnam and propose policy solutions to improve the effectiveness of reform in the coming period. The article is built based on synthesizing theories on administrative reform, analyzing international digital governance models, and surveying the implementation of digital public services in several ministries, branches, and localities. The study answers the questions (i) How has digital transformation impacted administrative procedure reform in Vietnam? (ii) What difficulties and limitations exist and need to be resolved? (iii) What solutions help improve the effectiveness of state management and people's satisfaction in the new context? This approach is expected to contribute academic and practical perspectives, supplementing the basis for policy making in the APR and building a DT in Vietnam.

2. Theoretical basis and research overview

2.1. Concept and content of administrative procedure reform and digital transformation

Administrative procedure reform (APR) is the process of reviewing, simplifying, and modernizing work processes of state agencies to reduce time and costs for organizations and citizens, while improving transparency and efficiency of state management. In Vietnam, administrative procedure reform is identified as a key content of the State Administrative Reform Master Program for the period 2021–2030, focusing on the application of information technology and digital transformation to management activities (Hai, 2026).

Digital transformation (DT) is a comprehensive change in the way services are organized, managed, and provided through the application of digital technology, big data, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms. In the field of public administration, digital transformation includes the digitization of administrative processes but also aims to build a digital government, ensuring the ability to interact and share data between agencies and with people transparently and effectively (Cuong & Le, 2024). The digital government model is considered a higher stage of e-government development, focusing on providing online public services based on open data and advanced technology, aiming at the experience of citizens as a central "customer" (Briesen *et al.*, 2019).

2.2. Theoretical basis

Administrative procedure reform and digital transformation in the public sector are influenced by many modern governance theories. First, the New Public Management (NPM) theory emphasizes efficiency, transparency, cost reduction, and increased citizen satisfaction through the application of market mechanisms and technology to public service activities. In the context of Vietnam, the NPM has been applied to reform administrative procedures, simplify processes, and provide online public services

(Painter, 2003). Second, e-government and digital government theories are considered the foundation for digitizing and restructuring public services. According to Erh (2023), this process is not only about upgrading the IT system but also about innovating the management method, focusing on data and people.

In addition, the integrated digital governance model is applied by many countries to synchronize data, reduce overlap in processing records, thereby improving the response capacity of the administrative system (Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020). Vietnam is implementing Project 06/CP on developing applications of population data, identification, and electronic authentication, contributing to improving people's experience when performing online administrative procedures.

2.3. Research overview

In recent years, many international studies have focused on analyzing the impact of digital transformation on administrative reform. According to Briesen *et al.* (2019) compared the experiences between Germany and Vietnam, arguing that technology factors need to be combined with institutional reform and human resource training to achieve sustainable efficiency. At the regional level, Erh's (2023) study on Singapore's digital transformation journey shows that the country's success comes from investing in synchronous digital infrastructure, building a "one-stop service" mechanism, and encouraging private sector participation in public service provision.

Meyerhoff Nielsen and Jordanoski (2020) pointed out that the digital coordination and governance models of Korea, Denmark, and Australia provide valuable lessons for developing countries, especially in terms of data interconnectivity and security risk management. Studies on digital transformation in healthcare administration and public service sectors in ASEAN also affirm the role of data and decision analysis in optimizing processes and improving citizen satisfaction (Wang *et al.*, 2023).

In Vietnam, digital transformation and administrative procedure reform are strongly promoted through many national policies and strategies, such as the National Digital Transformation Program to 2030, Project 06/CP, along with upgrading the National Public Service Portal. Research by Chuc and Anh (2023) analyzed the digital transformation situation in Vietnam, indicating that the government has achieved many important results in digitalizing public services, but there are still barriers in terms of technology infrastructure, legal framework, and digital skills of officials.

Recent studies emphasize the role of policy in promoting the digital capabilities of businesses and public agencies. Do Thi *et al.* (2024) demonstrate that policy accessibility and the level of state support have a significant impact on the digital transformation capacity of enterprises, thereby reflecting the close relationship between policy and the effectiveness of administrative reform. In addition, Doan *et al.* (2025) studied the impact of digital transformation on grassroots administrative services, affirming that digital transformation has significantly improved transparency and speed of processing records. Some other studies focus on citizen satisfaction when accessing public services in the context of reform and digital transformation. Hai (2026) points out that citizen

satisfaction depends not only on the quality of digital services but also on the interactivity, transparency, and willingness of officials to handle online. Pham (2023) and Painter (2003) both emphasized that, in addition to technology, administrative procedure reform still requires human factors, process improvement, and service culture change in the public sector.

Although there have been many studies on digital transformation and administrative reform, most of them still focus on analyzing each aspect separately, such as e-government, online public services, or the digital capacity of state agencies. There have not been many in-depth studies analyzing the simultaneous relationship between digital transformation and administrative procedure reform from the perspective of public administration, especially assessing the efficiency and level of satisfaction of citizens. Quantitative studies on the impact of digital transformation on shortening the time to process administrative procedures, reducing social costs, and improving service quality are still limited. This is the gap that this article aims to fill, aiming to supplement the academic and practical perspectives, proposing solutions for Vietnam to promote administrative procedure reform in the digital age.

3. Research method

This paper uses a qualitative research approach combined with analysis and synthesis of secondary documents to clarify the current status of administrative procedure reform in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam. The research begins with a review of domestic and foreign scientific documents related to digital transformation, administrative reform, and public administration, including works by Briesen *et al.* (2019), Chuc and Anh (2023), as well as international comparative studies by Meyerhoff Nielsen and Jordanoski (2020). This approach helps to systematize theories and identify key factors affecting the digital transformation process in state administration.

Research data is collected from official sources, including the administrative reform report of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Public Service Portal, Project 06/CP, and statistics related to online public services in the period 2019–2024. In addition, the study draws on recent work on the impact of digital policies and capabilities, such as Do Thi *et al.* (2024) on the role of policies in enhancing digital capabilities, and Doan *et al.* (2025) on the impact of digital on grassroots administrative services.

A case study approach is applied to a number of typical ministries, sectors, and localities in administrative reform and digital implementation, including Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and An Giang. This allows for comparison of domestic practices with successful models from Singapore and South Korea, as noted by Erh (2023) and Cuong and Le (2024).

Finally, the analysis results are compared with the theoretical framework of new public administration and digital government, in order to propose solutions suitable for Vietnam's conditions. This approach not only ensures systematicity but also helps the

article contribute an in-depth academic perspective and valuable reference for policymakers (Hai, 2026; Pham, 2023).

4. Current status of administrative procedure reform in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam

4.1. Context and policies to promote administrative procedure reform

Administrative procedure reform in Vietnam is a key content of the State administrative reform master plan for the period 2021–2030, identified by the Government as a driving force to improve the quality of public services and create favorable conditions for people and businesses. From 2016 to 2025, the Government has issued many important policies and programs, such as Decision No. 749/QD-TTg on the National Digital Transformation Program to 2030 and Project 06/CP on developing applications of population data, identification, and electronic authentication to serve administrative procedure reform. These policies affirm Vietnam's determination to build a modern, transparent, and people-centered administration (Chuc & Anh, 2023).

At the regional level, many studies have suggested that the success of digital transformation and administrative reform depends not only on technology but also on the synchronization of institutions, digital infrastructure, and human resources (Briesen *et al.*, 2019; Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020). From the experiences of Singapore and South Korea, Vietnam has taken concrete steps in upgrading the national data system, developing an electronic public service portal, and promoting interconnected digital platforms to reduce procedures and processing time (Erh, 2023).

4.2. Achievements in administrative procedure reform

Building and operating the National Public Service Portal. The National Public Service Portal, launched in December 2019, is one of the major steps forward in administrative procedure reform. By 2025, the portal will have integrated thousands of online public services at levels 3 and 4, allowing people and businesses to carry out many administrative procedures without having to go to public agencies. According to a report by Science and Technology, the rate of online records has increased steadily over the years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the demand for online transactions increased sharply (Mai *et al.*, 2024).

Deploying a national database on population and electronic identification. An important achievement of Vietnam is the completion of a national database on population, which is connected and shared with ministries and branches to verify information quickly and accurately. The Vietnam Electronic Identification (VNeID) has been applied, facilitating the shortening of the file processing process and reducing the necessary paperwork for people (Doan *et al.*, 2025).

The government has cut and simplified administrative procedures. From 2016–2023, procedures have been cut or simplified to reduce processing time and social costs. Procedures related to business registration, construction permits, and health and

education services have been put online, saving time and increasing transparency (Hai, 2026).

The experience of citizens and businesses should be enhanced. The government has promoted administrative services under the electronic "one-stop" mechanism. Citizens can look up the status of their applications, make payments online, and receive results via public postal services. These improvements have contributed to increasing satisfaction and reducing corruption, which is a major challenge in traditional administrative reform (Pham, 2023).

4.3. Limitations and challenges

Administrative reform in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam faces many difficulties, such as an unsynchronized digital infrastructure, and many mountainous and remote provinces still have limitations in telecommunications and broadband infrastructure. This affects people's ability to access online public services (Chuc & Anh, 2023). The quality of online services is uneven; some online public services are still complicated, the interface is not friendly, and there is a lack of integration between ministries and branches. Do Thi *et al.* (2024) pointed out that the availability and accessibility of online public services still depend heavily on data synchronization between management agencies.

Many officials are not yet proficient in digital skills and electronic file processing procedures. This leads to a situation where some procedures still have to be processed manually, reducing the effectiveness of administrative reform. According to Hai's (2026) study shows that citizen satisfaction still depends largely on the direct service capacity of officials. The legal framework on security and personal data is not yet complete, and the management of personal data and information security is still a challenge. The deployment of digital platforms needs to be accompanied by a strict legal framework to ensure privacy and data security for citizens (Painter, 2003).

5. Discussion

5.1. Impact of digital transformation on administrative procedure reform in Vietnam

Digital transformation has been creating fundamental changes in the organization and operation of public administration in Vietnam. The deployment of the National Public Service Portal, population database, and electronic identification system not only helps streamline procedures but also reduces time and costs for citizens and businesses. Research by Doan *et al.* (2025) shows that online public administrative services have increased transparency, reduced corruption, and improved people's access to services in many localities.

An important impact of digital transformation is to improve transparency and accountability. Previously, many administrative procedures had to go through many intermediaries and were prone to negativity, but with the digitization of processes, records are tracked and updated online, making it easy for people to check the processing

status. This not only increases citizens' trust in public agencies but also promotes a more open and professional service culture (Hai, 2026).

Digital transformation also helps improve the productivity and service quality of civil servants. Centralized database and record management software systems allow for faster processing while reducing errors due to manual operations. However, the digital capacity of civil servants is still a limiting factor, as some are not yet proficient in using technology. This gives rise to a situation of "digital formality", when procedures are still complicated and people are forced to submit applications directly (Chuc & Anh, 2023).

5.2. Limitations and challenges

Although digital transformation has brought many benefits, administrative reform in Vietnam still faces many challenges. The disparity in digital infrastructure between localities makes it difficult to synchronously deploy online public services. Some mountainous and remote provinces still lack telecommunications infrastructure, making it difficult for people to access online platforms (Do Thi *et al.*, 2024).

The legal framework for data management and information security is not complete, raising concerns about privacy and personal data security. Integrating data from multiple agencies requires strict data security and governance mechanisms; otherwise, it will lead to the risk of information leakage. This issue has been mentioned by Painter (2003) as a challenge in modern administrative reform, when the legal system has not kept up with the speed of technological development.

In addition, the fear and lack of technology skills of a segment of the population, especially the elderly or those in rural areas, are also barriers to accessing online public services. Therefore, administrative procedure reform associated with digital transformation needs to simultaneously focus on digital skills training policies for both officials and citizens, as well as on improving user-friendly interface design.

5.3. Comparison with international models

Singapore and South Korea are considered models in administrative procedure reform and digital transformation implementation. Singapore has built a "one-stop service" mechanism with integrated public services on a single platform, allowing citizens to quickly resolve all administrative procedures (Erh, 2023). South Korea has succeeded thanks to its data synchronization strategy and strict legal system on information security, combined with digital capacity-building programs for civil servants (Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020).

Compared to developed countries such as Singapore and South Korea, Vietnam is in a period of strong transformation, but it still has a certain gap. Singapore has implemented a "one-stop service" model through the eGov system, allowing citizens to handle most administrative procedures on a single integrated platform. The Singaporean government places special emphasis on user experience, with a simple interface, multilingual support, and a quick feedback mechanism (Erh, 2023).

South Korea also stands out with its "Government 3.0" strategy, focusing on opening data and optimizing interactions between citizens and the government. Research by Meyerhoff Nielsen and Jordanoski (2020) shows that South Korea has succeeded by building a unified database, applying advanced security solutions, and regularly upgrading its technology system to meet the needs of society. Vietnam is gradually completing the national population database and integrating inter-sectoral information, but the scale and level of data interconnectivity are still not comprehensive.

Singapore and South Korea have strong digital skills training policies for civil servants and citizens. Digital capacity-building programs are implemented at a national scale, helping citizens get acquainted with online services right from the implementation stage. Although Vietnam has training programs, the level of synchronization and efficiency is not high, especially in localities with limited resources.

From the experience of advanced countries, some important lessons can be drawn for Vietnam. People are at the center of administrative reform, so online public services should be designed based on user experience, with a simple interface, multi-platform support and remote access. Lessons from Singapore show that integrating multiple services on a single portal helps people save time and costs (Erh, 2023).

The government should synchronise data and improve information security. Experience from Korea shows that a unified data system and strong security mechanisms are the foundation for building people's trust in digital services (Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020). Vietnam needs to promote data sharing and interconnectivity among ministries and sectors, and issue a comprehensive legal framework for personal data protection.

Training and developing digital capacity for officials and civil servants must be equipped with technology skills and soft skills to serve people more effectively. Hai (2026) emphasized that citizen satisfaction comes not only from technology, but also from the attitude and professional service ability of officials.

6. Solutions and policy recommendations

Administrative procedure reform in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam has achieved many important results, but it still faces many challenges in terms of infrastructure, legal framework, digital capacity of civil servants, and people's participation. Based on the analysis of the current situation and international comparisons, some solutions and policy recommendations can be proposed.

First, perfecting the institutions and legal framework.

The Government should give top priority to continuing to perfect the legal system related to administrative procedure reform and digital transformation. The legal framework needs to be synchronized with modern digital governance trends, regulations on personal data protection, electronic identification, and information security. According to Painter (2003), institutions are an important foundation to ensure that reform programs are not interrupted and achieve long-term effectiveness.

The Government should issue clear guidelines and promote the mechanism for sharing data among ministries, branches, and localities. The implementation of the National Population Database, the National Public Service Portal, and the VNeID system needs to be updated periodically, ensuring open but safe and transparent data (Doan *et al.*, 2025).

Policies should be strengthened to encourage the application of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data in document processing and information security. Experience from Korea and Singapore shows that combining technological innovation with a tight legal framework will create a favorable environment to improve the effectiveness of administrative procedure reform (Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020; Erh, 2023).

Second, synchronous investment in digital infrastructure.

Digital infrastructure plays a decisive role in the success of digital transformation and administrative reform. Although large cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have developed strongly, many mountainous and remote areas still do not have enough telecommunications infrastructure to implement online public services. The government needs to have a synchronous investment plan for broadband networks, data centers, and cloud computing platforms for state agencies (Chuc & Anh, 2023).

Lessons from Singapore show that building an open data infrastructure and a centralized processing system helps reduce overlap, optimize processes, and facilitate the integration of many public services on a single platform (Erh, 2023). Therefore, Vietnam should prioritize the strategy of digitizing documents and standardizing storage processes, thereby improving the ability to exploit cross-sectoral data.

Third, improve the digital capacity of civil servants

Public service human resources are a key factor in the process of administrative reform. The government should implement specialized digital skills training programs for civil servants, helping them become proficient in using management software, processing electronic records and supporting citizens online. Hai (2026) believes that citizen satisfaction depends not only on technology but also on the service attitude and capacity of civil servants in the digital environment.

It is necessary to apply periodic digital capacity assessment tools to identify training needs, encourage transparent reward and punishment mechanisms to enhance accountability. Cooperating with technology companies to build online courses (e-learning) for civil servants will help optimize training costs and time.

Fourth, improve the citizen experience and focus on people.

The principle of "focusing on people" should be thoroughly applied in the design and implementation of online public services. The interface of public service portals should be user-friendly, support multiple devices (computers, smartphones), and have online help functions (chatbots or automatic switchboards). Lessons from Singapore show that continuous surveys and feedback from citizens are the basis for adjusting services to suit actual needs (Erh, 2023).

Communication about the benefits of online public services should be enhanced to raise awareness and encourage people to use them. Communication is important in rural areas where people have limited digital skills. Free guidance and support programs at public administrative centers will help reduce technological barriers.

Fifth, enhance public-private partnership and innovation

Public-private partnership (PPP) in infrastructure and digital platform development is a popular trend in the world. Countries such as South Korea and Singapore have leveraged the power of the private sector to build advanced data infrastructure and security systems (Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020). Vietnam can promote cooperation with large technology enterprises to develop a digital public service ecosystem, while supporting innovative startups in the GovTech sector.

Opening application programming interfaces for public services will encourage businesses to develop integrated utility applications, thereby creating innovative solutions to help people access administrative procedures more easily. This is also in line with the trend of "open government", promoting data-based innovation (Cuong & Le, 2024).

Sixth, improve data security and governance.

Protecting personal data and securing systems is an urgent requirement in the context of increasing cyber threats. The government needs to improve the Personal Data Protection Law and establish security standards based on international practices. In addition, training information security skills for officials and citizens is also an indispensable factor to reduce the risk of data leakage (Do Thi *et al.*, 2024).

Korea's experience shows that the application of technologies such as advanced encryption and multi-factor authentication has contributed to ensuring data security, while increasing people's trust in online public services (Meyerhoff Nielsen & Jordanoski, 2020).

From the solutions, the paper proposes several overall policy recommendations, including that the government should prioritize the digitization of essential public services, such as business registration, health care, education, social insurance, and transportation. Develop a legal framework for open data, ensuring transparency and data reusability among agencies. Invest in a comprehensive digital capacity development program, including civil servants and the community. Establish a real-time citizen feedback system to promptly improve online public services. Promote public-private partnerships to develop GovTech platforms and apply advanced technology. These recommendations help improve the effectiveness of administrative procedure reform, contributing to the goal of building a digital government and digital society in Vietnam in the period 2025–2030.

7. Conclusion

Administrative procedure reform in the context of digital transformation is becoming a strategic priority of the Vietnamese Government to improve management efficiency,

enhance transparency, and improve the quality of public services. The study analyzed the current status of administrative procedure reform associated with digital transformation, pointing out outstanding achievements such as the implementation of the National Public Service Portal, the population database, the VNeID, and efforts to reduce and simplify many procedures for people and businesses. These results demonstrate Vietnam's strong determination to build a digital government and a modern digital society.

Administrative procedure reform still faces several significant challenges. The gap in digital infrastructure between regions, limitations in the digital capacity of civil servants, and an incomplete legal framework on personal data protection are affecting the effectiveness of online public service implementation. The fear of technology among a segment of the population, in rural and mountainous areas, reduces the effectiveness of accessing digital public services.

Comparative analysis with international models such as Singapore and South Korea shows that Vietnam should learn from the success factors of unified data infrastructure, "one-stop service" services, and comprehensive digital skills training policies for citizens. These experiences affirm the importance of putting people at the centre, ensuring data connectivity, and enhancing public-private partnerships to build an efficient and transparent public service ecosystem.

The study proposes key solutions, including perfecting the legal framework on data governance and security, synchronously investing in digital infrastructure, developing digital capacity for civil servants, improving citizen experience, and promoting public-private partnerships. Establishing a monitoring and evaluation system based on international indicators will help Vietnam track reform progress and improve implementation efficiency.

In the future, further research on the quantitative impact of digital transformation on citizen satisfaction and document processing efficiency will be a necessary direction. This helps optimize administrative procedure reform, contributing to the national strategy on building digital government, digital economy, and digital society in the period 2025-2030.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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

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