**ENHANCING GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOGY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN VIETNAM**

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Understanding and applying digital technology in governance is one of the requirements of good governance. Since the 2000s, the Government of Vietnam has paid attention and attached importance to the development of digital technology application in state agencies' operations, determining this as a driving force contributing to the innovation and the ability to take shortcuts, to be proactive in order to successfully implement industrialization and modernization. The paper analyzes the current situation of digital technology application in public administration in Vietnam in terms of enhancing openness, transparency, and accountability; promoting public participation in state management; ensure the right to access information; improve service efficiency, and provide public services. On the basis of analyzing the results and limitations in the application of digital technology in public administration, the paper analyzes the challenges of the digital technology application to promote good governance, then propose solutions to them. The basic solutions include building a national strategy for digital transformation; developing policies and laws on digital technology application in public administration; strengthening applications to promote the right to participation, the right to access information, and to prevent and fight corruption; prepare plans for the application and processing of some new applications such as artificial intelligence (AI) management.

**1. Overview of the Application of Digital Technology in Public Administration in Vietnam**

Since the 2000s, the Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam have paid attention and attached importance to the development of information technology application in state agencies' activities, determining that this is the driving force contributing to the innovation and creating possibilities. ability to take shortcuts, to be proactive to successfully implement industrialization and modernization[[3]](#footnote-3).

In 2014, the Politburo issued Resolution No. 36-NQ / TW on promoting information technology application and development to meet the requirements of sustainable development and international integration. The resolution aims to effectively implement the administrative reform program by 2020, closely linked with the development of e-government and the provision of online public services at a high level and in many areas.

In 2015, the Government issued the first resolution focusing on e-government to promote e-government development and improve the quality and efficiency of state agencies. On May 4, 2017, the Prime Minister issued Directive No. 16 / CT-TTg on approaching Industry 4.0, directing ministries, agencies and localities to “review strategies, action programs, develop plans and key tasks in accordance with the development trend of the 4th Industrial Revolution, and building a digital transformation strategy, smart governance, smart city”. Later, on July 12, 2018, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 28/2018 / QD-TTg on sending and receiving electronic documents between agencies in the state administrative system, regulating the ministries, branches, and localities towards paperless offices.

On March 7, 2019, the Government issued Resolution No. 17 / NQ-CP on a number of key tasks and solutions for e-Government development. Accordingly, the aim of the Resolution is to perfect the e-Government foundation in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the state administrative apparatus and the quality of service for people and enterprises; develop e-Government based on open data towards digital government, digital economy, and digital society; ensure information safety and network security; raising the ranking of e-Government according to the United Nations assessment, increasing from 10 to 15 places by 2020, bringing Vietnam into the group of four leading ASEAN countries in the ranking of e-Government according to the United Nations assessment until 2025. To achieve that strategic goal, the Resolution 17/NQ-CP provides specific targets and tasks corresponding to each stage of building and developing e-Government in terms of revising legal regulations, building a technology platform in line with the trend of e-Government development in the world, applying information technology in association with administrative reform, ensuring information security, ensuring resources force in implementing e-Government development ...

On the basis of Resolution 17 / NQ-CP, the Office of the Government and the Ministry of Information and Communications focused on advising the Government and the Prime Minister to issue important legal documents such as the Government’s Decree No. 09/2019 / ND-CP in January 24, 2019 on the reporting regime in state agencies; the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 274 / QD-TTg in March 12, 2019 on approving the National Public Service Portal Project, the Project on building an information system for meetings and handling work of the Government (eCabinet) and the Scheme on building a policy advisory system (eConsultation) that is being carried out under the direction of the Prime Minister before the Prime Minister approves it; submit to the Government dossiers to request the formulation of a Decree on connection management, digital data sharing, Decree on electronic identifiers and identification of individuals and organizations, Decree on administrative procedure implementation in the electronic environment, and many other legal documents being developing by ministries. On April 9, 2020, the Government issued Decree No. 47/2020/ND-CP on the management, connection and sharing of digital data of state agencies. This Decree provides for state agencies' digital data management, connection and sharing activities, including: digital data management and administration; connecting and sharing digital data; using and exploiting digital data of state agencies; provide open data of state agencies to organizations and individuals; rights and responsibilities in connecting and sharing digital data of state agencies.

Implementing the above policies, state agencies from central to local levels actively develop and apply digital technologies in state management, contributing to promoting openness, transparency and accountability of State administrative agencies at all levels.

The Government has implemented a series of measures, such as the application of new technologies in the deployment of e-Government platform systems; to apply information technology in association with administrative reform in service of the Government's and Prime Minister's direction and administration; deploy information systems to serve people, businesses, people, businesses as the center ...[[4]](#footnote-4) According to the Government's assessment, the implementation of e-Government in ministries, branches and localities in recent years has achieved important results. By June 2018, ministries, sectors, and localities have provided nearly 50,000 online public services (levels 3 and 4). There are more than 50 ministries, branches and localities that build and issue e-Government Architecture. The sending and receiving of electronic documents has been linked and linked between 28/29 ministries and 63/63 provinces and cities. 5 out of 6 national databases on business registration, land, residential, finance and insurance have been implemented.[[5]](#footnote-5) According to the Assessment Report on E-Government of the United Nations, in 2016, Vietnam's E-Government Development Index (EGDI) ranked 89 out of 193 countries, up 10 ranks, of which the section on online public services (OSI) ranked 74/193 countries, up 8 ranks (compared to 2014); By 2018, Vietnam's E-Government Development Index ranked 88/193 countries, up 01 rank, of which the component index of online public services (OSI) ranked 59/193 countries. increase, up 15 ranks, (compared to 2016), but compared to the region, we are still modestly 6th ranked in ASEAN.[[6]](#footnote-6)

At the local level, smart city building and development is a national policy enacted in the Vietnam Smart City Sustainable Development Scheme for the period 2018 - 2025 and orientation to 2030, which was approved by the Prime Minister in Decision No. 950/QD-TTg in August 1, 2018. Under this project, the sustainable smart city development is based on the application of information and communication technology (ICT), modern technology to synchronize technical and ICT infrastructure to improve the efficiency of urban government management, improve the efficiency of land, energy, and resources development, improve the quality of the urban environment, stimulate economic growth and development - society; providing smart urban facilities to the community with the basic foundation of urban technical infrastructure system and ICT infrastructure system. On that basis, many localities have proposed and implemented smart city construction projects. For example, since 2012, Da Nang city has approved a smart city project and implemented it across the city. Binh Duong province has actively cooperated with Dutch partners to build a smart city using “the 3-stakeholder model - Triple Helix”[[7]](#footnote-7). Across the country, nearly 30 localities have signed cooperation memoranda with partners such as large telecommunications technology groups such as VNPT and Viettel to build a smart city project, in which many localities have approved and organized for implementation such as Quang Ninh.Vinh Phuc, Bac Ninh, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho City, and Phu Quoc island district...[[8]](#footnote-8)

**2. Some initial results of the application of digital technology in promoting good governance**

Digital technology policy and implementation have a positive impact on promoting good governance in governance through the following aspects:

*- Strengthen the openness, transparency, and accountability of state administrative officials and agencies*

The development and implementation of e-Government has shown positive effects in promoting openness, transparency, and accountability of state administrative officials and agencies. The provision of online public services, processing work documents in the network environment, and the use of one-stop information systems contribute to improving the transparency and accountability of civil servants. The construction and improvement of online public services between government and business contribute to make the business environment for businesses become more transparent and favorable, especially improve the provision of public services in the tax and insurance industry, helping to improve the quality of the investment environment.[[9]](#footnote-9)

*- Promote people's online participation in state management*

Under the provisions of the Constitution, citizens have the right to "participate in the management of state and society, participate in discussions, and make recommendations to state agencies on grassroots, local and national issues", and the Government has the responsibility to "create conditions for citizens to participate in state and social management; publicity and transparency in receiving and responding to citizens' opinions and recommendations” (Article 28). However, in reality, the public participation in state management still has many limitations such as the the closeness in the policymaking and implementation is still popular; the law has not provided sufficient conditions for public participation; the accountability of state agencies is not highly respected; the public has difficulties in accessing information; the Fatherland Front and its member organizations has played a limited role of social criticism; and the participation of social organizations has not been encouraged and facilitated ...

However, digital technology has very positive effects on motivating people to participate online. While the traditional form of (direct) participation is still limited, the online participation form of people is being used more and more actively. According to E-Government Statistics of the United Nations, the online participation index of the people (E-Participation Index) has basically tended to be higher and higher in recent years, reflected in the following statistics table.[[10]](#footnote-10)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ranking EPART | 2018 | 2016 | 2014 | 2012 | 2010 |
| Vietnam/193 countries | 72 | 43 | 65 | 101 | 110 |

*- Ensuring the people's right to access information*

Public participation in state governance is supported and guaranteed by the right to access information. Digital technology application policies play an important role in ensuring people's right to access information. It is easy and convenient for people to access information provided by the state through online platforms. The development of the internet and social networks creates an ideal environment for people to access and participate in the policymaking and making process.

*- Increase the provision of online public services*

The provision of online public services plays an important role in ensuring openness, transparency, and accountability of public administrations. In fact, online public service provision has been increasingly focused and achieved many encouraging results; a number of online public services have been provided to businesses and people such as business registration, tax declaration, tax payment, customs, insurance, social security.[[11]](#footnote-11) According to the United Nations, although the overall e-Government index of Vietnam is average, the component index of online public service provision in Vietnam is increasingly positive. It should be noted that openness and accountability are 2 out of 5 criteria (the remaining 3 criteria are effectiveness, reliability; inclusiveness) to evaluate the online public service index (OSI) according to the United Nations standards.

The application of digital technology in state management mainly has a positive impact in promoting publicity, transparency, and accountability of state administrative agencies. However, it can also create other negative risks such as the risks of harms to order security, public interests, society and human rights in the network environment. One of the biggest challenges to openness, transparency, and accountability in the context of digital technology is the application of AI in state management and society. AI brings great values to people and society, it also poses enormous challenges for openness, transparency, and accountability, such as the problems of openness and transparency of the process AI systems and accountability of organizations and individuals building, developing and using AI... This is a reality happening in all digital governance platforms in the world as well as in Vietnam. Therefore, it is important to limit the risks and negative effects of digital technology in state management on the one hand, and on the other hand to balance the values of openness, transparency, accountability and other personal and social interests.

**3. Challenges in applying digital technology in Vietnam**

There are a number of challenges in applying digital technology to improve good governance in state management in Vietnam such as low e-Government ratings; lack of online public information and data of ministries; difficulties in accessing public information; public policies and services are not centered on people and businesses; there is no effective mechanism for coordination and accountability among agencies, organizations, and individuals; agencies, administrative staffs are still bureaucratic, not highly accountable in public service; many people are not fully aware of digital technology and its applications in state management; inadequate and incomplete policy framework, laws, procedures...

**4. Solutions to apply digital technology for good governance in state management in Vietnam**

Through our research, the paper proposes a number of solutions to apply digital technology to promote good governance in state management in Vietnam:

- Developing a national strategy for digital transformation, improve policies and law on digital technology application in state management so that on the one hand, they can fully make use of their values ​​in terms of openness, transparency and accountability, at the same time balancing other values ​​and benefits of individuals and society, as well as minimizing risks and negative effects of the application of digital technology in state management;

- Developing e-government that is fair, accessible to everyone, with attention to disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and groups. Government must have a responsibility to facilitate and support the people, especially the people in remote areas, the poor and the old people to access to digital technologies and digital applications.

- Strengthening applications to promote the right to access information, in which focusing on developing information systems, state management information databases; ensure the responsibility to proactively disclose public information, provide information to people upon request; building forms of sharing and providing information that are easy to access and use; build specialized agencies to coordinate and provide online information ...

- Strengthening the right to participate in state management on online interfaces and applications. There is a need to promote the development and improvement of an open, data-driven government to empower people and broader conditions to participate in state management. The Internet and social networks on the one hand need to reinforce an important channel for people to participate in state management, on the other hand, it is necessary to build and perfect the scope and limits of internet freedom to ensure order, safety and security of people and society.

- Developing digital applications in anti-corruption through openness, transparency and ensure full accountability in state management activities.

- Studying the national policy framework on AI and AI governance for a good society to ensure openness, transparency and accountability of all stakeholders, especially public agencies.

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6. Dr. Ngô Hải Phan, cited, p. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Three stakeholders include Government, Schools and Enterprise. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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