

Overview of Salary Policies for Vietnamese Civil Servants in the Stage 1951–1960

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Abstract:

This is the third article in a series of articles on salary policy for Vietnamese civil servants from 1945 to the present. This article describes the salary policy of civil servants in the period 1951-1960. Within 10 years, the salary policy has been revised three times, in 1955, 1958 and 1960 respectively.

Keywords: Vietnam, civil servant, salary, minimum wage, allowances

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I. INTRODUCTION

The salary regime is one of the motivational policies for employees in both the public sector and private sector. For Vietnam since the independence day of September 2, 1945, the Government has both concentrated on the main goal of defending the country against invading imperialists and cared about the regimes and policies for those who were working for the government. According to the provisions of Ordinance No. 76, civil servants were citizens who hold a task in the State apparatus of the people's government, under the supreme leadership of the Government (Ordinance No.76/SL, 1950).

During the years of the war, workers, labours as well as the army and other classes of people were determined to endure hardships and serve the frontline for the victory of the resistance. At that time, they had to work hard to restore the economy, the Government also needed to foster a part of that reduced labour force. Thus, each person would be more excited to actively emulate production, implement thrift, and develop the national economy. On the other hand, to properly use each person's talents, encourage learning and practice for professional and technical advancement, and promote creative labour, the Government promulgated salary scales and professional standards to arrange properly. The arrangement and payment of salary according to the new scale would have the effect of improving living conditions for workers and officials, encourage them to boost production and work more efficiently.

The period 1951-1960 was the period of continuing to fight against foreign invaders and build the country Vietnam. The salary policy for civil servants in this period began to have more changes. To continue the series of articles on the salary policy of Vietnamese civil servants from 1945 to the present time, this article will focus on presenting an overview of the salary policies for civil servants in the period 1951-1960 in addition to the two previous articles written and published about the salary policy of the period 1945-1950 (Le Thi Thu Huyen et al., 2021) and 2010-2019 (Le & Phan, 2019).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHOD

The topic of salary policy for Vietnamese civil servants through historical periods has also received the attention of some researchers. For example, the articles of Vu Thi Nga's research paper in 2014 on Vietnam's minimum wage system from 1945 to 2010 (Nga, 2010); Luu Thi Lam's master thesis in 2014 with the topic of Vietnamese law on minimum wages (Lam, 2014); Vu Thi Tam's master thesis titled "Evaluation of Viet Nam Public Servant Salary Reform for the period 2001 -2010" (Vu Thi Tam, 2014), Bui Thi Thuy Ngan's thesis on wage reform in Vietnam and some other articles by many authors (Bui, 2015; Imbert, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2017; Phuong et al., 2018; Sakellariou & Fang, 2014).

This article is written with a qualitative approach to describe the salary policy based on the document review method. From secondary data of the period 1951-1960 on the civil servant salary policies, the author analyzes and draws assessments to help readers have more knowledge about the wage policies for civil servants in a historical period of Vietnam.

III. FINDINGS

1. The content of salary policies for Vietnamese civil servants from 1951 to 1960

Since May 1948 Ordinance 188-SL and other legal documents had stipulated that civil servant's salary included main salary and allowances. The civil servant salary scale consisted of 25 levels, each level was regulated by a specific amount of money. The minimum salary was corresponding to the salary of level 1. On May 20, 1950, Ordinance No. 76-SL and Ordinance No. 81-SL were issued. Ordinance 76-SL was about the regulation of civil servants, Ordinance No. 81-SL stipulated that civil servants' salaries were based on rice prices because at that time the war was still fierce in the entire territory of Vietnam, production was difficult and rice prices were pushed up. The minimum wage (level 1) corresponded to the price of 35 kilograms of rice and the highest level (level 25) was equal to the price of 72 kilograms of rice. The rice price mentioned in Ordinance 81-SL was the price of medium-grade rice sold on the market, recognized by the Administrative Resistance Committee of the District, Town or City (Ordinance No.81-SL, 1950).

That salary policy continued to apply in the years 1951-1955. Until December 30, 1955, there were changes in the salary scale of civil servants and people working for the state sector.

1.1. Main salary

In the period from 1951 to June 1955, the main salary of civil servants was received according to the salary scale from level 1 to 25 specified in Ordinance No.81. Salary was paid equivalent to the rice price in the range from the price of 35 kilograms of rice (minimum wage) to the price of 72 kilograms of rice (Circular 10-LD-TT, 1952; Inter-ministerial Circular No.18-LB-TT, 1955; Ordinance No.81-SL, 1950; Le Thi Thu Huyen et al., 2021).

Peace had been restored in the North of Vietnam since 1954 and until December 30th 1955, the Prime Minister promulgated Decree 650-TTg regulating salaries for cadres, civil servants and employees of the Government and state-owned enterprises (Decree No. 650-TTg, 1955). The salary policy specified in this Decree 650 took effect from July 1, 1955 (Circular No.1-LD-TT, 1956). Article 1 of the Decree 650 clearly stated that all officials and employees working for the government and national enterprises would be classified into 4 common salary scales as shown in the table below. Each salary scale had a different number of salary levels, each level corresponded to a coefficient and a certain amount of money.

Table 1: Pay scales of public-sector employees in Decree 650-TTg, 1955

No.	Type of public-sector employee	Pay scale
1	Elected Cadre; Administrative staff (civil servant)	17-level pay scale from level 13 to level 1 for cadres, from level 17 to 6 for administrative staff
2	Technical staff	11-level pay scale
3	Worker	8-level pay scale
4	Normal labour	6-level pay scale

Source: (Decree No. 650-TTg, 1955; Decree No. 651-TTg, 1955)

Civil servants in this period were paid in the range from level 17 to 6 in the 17-level salary scale for cadres and civil servants (see Table 2).

Table 2: The 17-level pay scale for cadre and civil servant in Decree 650-TTg, 1955

Level	Coefficient	Monthly salary (VND)	Position
1	615	159,900	Cadre: level 13 to level 1 Civil servant (Administrative staff): level 17 to 6
2	525	136,500	
3	445	115,700	
4	375	97,500	
5	315	81,900	
6	265	68,900	
7	230	59,800	
8	210	54,600	
9	190	49,400	
10	170	44,200	
11	155	40,300	
12	140	36,400	
13	130	33,800	
14	120	31,200	
15	113	29,380	
16	106	27,560	
17	100	26,000	

Source: (Decree No. 650-TTg, 1955; Decree No. 651-TTg, 1955)

The salary levels in the pay scale were determined by the coefficient. The coefficient of the lowest salary (level 17) was 100. The highest salary (level 1) of the 17-level salary scale was 6.15 times the lowest one (level 17). Salary level 6, which was the highest salary of the civil servant (administrative staff) was 2.65 times the lowest salary. Different from the salary of the period 1948-1950 which the salary at level 1 was the lowest and level 25 was the highest, in the period 1955-1960 the highest salary was at level 1 and the lowest was at level 17.

Based on Decree 650 and Circular No.1-LD-TT dated Jan 5, 1956, guiding the implementation of salary regimes for workers and employees of Government, national enterprises and construction sites (Circular No.1-LD-TT, 1956), many legal documents were later issued by the Prime Minister to regulate the salary for specific industries. Some legal documents were Decree No. 747-TTg issued on April 23th 1956 to set salary scales for some technical occupations such as health, education, technical staff, art and culture, and trade (Decree No.747-TTg, 1956); Decree 760-TTg on May 7, 1956, for people who worked for the railway, radio postal industry (Decree No.760-TTg, 1956); ...

Since October 1, 1956, Inter-ministerial Circular No. 21-TT-LB stipulated a 5% increase in salary for civil servants in provinces, especially in Hai Phong, an increase of 8%, in Hanoi and Hong Gai mines an increase of 12% (Inter-ministerial Circular No. 21-TT-LB, 1956).

On May 31, 1958, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong signed Decree No. 270-TTg stipulating the salary regime for the administrative and public service sector to replace Decree 650 and Decree 747 issued in 1956. This Decree took effect on the first of May, 1958. The new salary regime in 1958 improved living conditions for cadres, public servants and other public employees and contributed to encouraging them to boost production and perform better. The decree stipulated 5 salary scales for different occupational groups of the State.

Table 3: Pay scales of public-sector employees in Decree 270

No.	Classification by job title	Pay scale
1	Cadre; Administrative staff (Civil servant)	21-level pay scale
2	Professional staff in the education field	16-level pay scale
3	Staff in the medic field	16-level pay scale
4	Interpreter	12-level pay scale
5	Workers of Government agencies	8-level pay scale

Source: (Decree No.270-TTg, 1958)

Table 4: The 21-level pay scale for cadres and civil servants specified in Decree 270

Level	Monthly salary (VND)	Pay scale for types of civil servants						
21	200,000							
20	186,000							
19	173,000							
18	160,000							
17	148,000							
16	136,000							
15	124,000							
14	113,000	Researchers and professional staff at central government agencies: Salary level 3 to 14						
13	102,000							
12	92,000		Researchers and professional staff at regional government agencies					
11	82,000							
10	72,000		Researcher and professional staff of government agencies in provinces and districts					
9	64,000				Administrative staff at government agencies at the central, provincial and district levels			
8	56,000							
7	50,000						Accountants, managers at central, provincial and district government agencies	
6	45,000							Clerk, receptionist, cashier and warehouse keeper at central, provincial and district government agencies
5	40,000							
4	36,000							
3	33,000						Guardian, janitor and custodian at central, provincial and district state agencies	
2	30,000							
1	27,300							

Source: (Decree No.270-TTg, 1958)

This 21-level salary scale, which didn't have any coefficient, was for cadres and civil servants. Level 1 was the lowest salary and level 21 was the highest. Each salary level was assigned a specific salary amount. Cadres in different job title groups had different salary scales ranging from level 6 to 21. Civil servants in different job titles were paid according to different salary scales ranging from level 1 to level 14 (see Table 4). The highest salary at level 21 was 7.3 times the lowest salary (level 1).

Based on Decree 270 effected on May 1, 1958, and Circular 85-TC/HCP on July 22, 1958, guiding to payment of arrears and new salary (Circular No. 85-TC/HCP, 1958), many legal documents were later issued by the State agencies to regulate the salary for specific fields. Some legal documents such as Decree 299-TTg on June 13, 1958, regulated the salary regime for cadres in the Vietnamese People's Army (Decree No. 299-TTg, 1958); Decree 17-VH-ND (Decree No.17-VH-ND, 1958) dated July 14, 1958, on the salary scales of the career branches under the Ministry of Culture,...

On April 27, 1960, the government council issued a Resolution on salary improvement and salary increase (Resolution on April 1960, 1960). Relied on this Resolution, on July 5, 1960, the Government Council (now the Government) issued Decree 25/CP stipulating the salary regime of the administrative and public service agencies. That salary policy was implemented according to three principles (Decree No.25-CP, 1960): The salary of the cadres and officials who were leaders was generally higher than that of the cadres and officials under the leadership; The salary for positions with high technical and professional requirements was higher than the salary for positions with simpler techniques and operations; The salary of public-sector employees in difficult and unhealthy conditions was higher than that of employees working in normal conditions (Circular No.20-LD/TT, 1960). There were many pay scales for different job positions, each pay scale had a specific salary amount for each salary level. Level 1 salary could vary between occupations. The regulation of high or low wages must be based on technical complexity, working conditions and the different importance of occupations in the national economy. The position salary table was designed according to the minimum - average - maximum correlation of 1 - 2.56 - 7.03. For instance, at salary level 1: a service worker had a salary of

27.3 VND, a light industry engineer had a salary of 70 VND, and those holding positions equivalent to a minister had a salary of 192 VND (27.3 – 70 – 192).

1.2. Allowances

In the period 1951- June 1955, civil servants received the same allowances as in the 1948-1950 period. Allowances included a family allowance; an expensive rice allowance; an allowance for bad-weather areas; a frontage zone allowance; an allowance for a leadership position, a job-specific allowance and an allowance for business travel (Le Thi Thu Huyen et al., 2021); injury allowance (Inter-ministerial Decree No.18 & 19, 1954).

From July 1955, allowances included travel allowance (Circular No. 184-TC-HC, 1956); an allowance for officials' children (Circular No.78-TC/HCP, 1958), allowance for sickness/maternity (Circular No.1-LD-TT, 1956); regional allowance 6%, 12%, 13%, 20% counted on main salary (Inter-ministerial Circular No. 21-TT-LB, 1956 and Decree 93-LB/ND on June 27, 1956), allowances for civil servants during the period of convalescence (Inter-ministerial No.12-TT/LB, 1957), temporary technical allowance for staffs receiving a salary of the 11-level pay scale (Directive No. 507-TTg, 1957).

On March 1, 1957, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 70-TTg stipulating the monthly supply of rice for all people who received a salary or living allowances from the State. They were military personnel, cadres, workers, civil servants, public servants, others working in the Military, People Committees, Government, Party agencies, construction sites and state-owned enterprises, students, patients, etc,... Each of them was received 15 kilograms of rice per month. The rice price supplied by the state was calculated at a stable price of 400VND/kg (Circular No. 10-LB-TC-NH-TN, 1957; Circular No.667-TC-HCP, 1956; Decision No.70-TTg, 1957; Inter-ministerial No.12-TT/LB, 1957). Hence the expensive rice allowance has been cut off since then.

Decree 270-TTg, which was issued on May 31, 1958, took effect from May 1st 1958. And other legal documents issued in 1958 and 1959 also stipulated allowances:

- Regional allowances included the rates 35%, 25%, 20%, 12%, 10% and 6% of the main salary relied on the types of the region such as special, I, II, III, IV, V (Circular No. 01-LD/TT, 1959; Circular No. 14/TTLB, 1959; Circular No. 85-TC/HCP, 1958; Decree No.182-TTg, 1958; Decree No.270-TTg, 1958; No. 06-TT/LB, 1959).

- Removal of the provisional technical allowance temporarily applied since 1957 (Circular No. 85-TC/HCP, 1958; Decree No.182-TTg, 1958; Decree No.270-TTg, 1958).

- Eliminating allowances for children of civil servants, set a subsidy of 5,000 VND a month for each child under 16 years old, from the third child onwards. If the child was still in school, he/she was entitled to this allowance until the child turned 18 years old (Circular No. 85-TC/HCP, 1958; Decree No.182-TTg, 1958; Decree No.270-TTg, 1958).

- Many other allowances were provisionally stipulated in Decree 167, issued on April 27, 1959, effective from January 1, 1959 such as overtime working allowance; severance allowance; salary allowance for the occupational accident; funeral allowance; medical treatment support allowance; maternity allowance, subsidy for officials' children; social allowances for families of civil servants in difficulty,...(Decree No. 167-TTg, 1959). Besides, civil servants in different industries would be paid additional special allowances. For example, the medic field had an additional allowance for working in dangerous conditions (Circular No. 18-BYT/TT, 1959); the irrigation field had an additional mobility allowance for civil servants to survey the terrain (Circular No. 14-TT/TL, 1959).

Since Decree No. 25-CP was issued on July 5, 1960, many legal documents regulating allowances for civil servants have also been issued. Types of allowances included mobility allowances from 10% to 30% of the main salary for officials doing field surveying and measuring (Circular No. 15-LD/TT, 1960); regional allowance with allowance rate from 6% to 40% of the main salary according to 6 types of regions (Circular No.16-LB/TT, 1960); Accommodation allowance for officials on business trips, including money for meals and accommodation fee (Circular No.03-TC/HCP/P1, 1960); an allowance for depreciation of private bicycles used for business travel, the allowance was a specific amount paid monthly, depending on the route and type of business trip in each month (Circular No.04-TC/HCP/P1, 1960; Circular No.735-TC/HCP/P1, 1960). Furthermore, civil servants working in some specific industries also received additional allowances, such as allowances for dangerous work for the health sector (Circular No.23-BYT/TT, 1960; Decree No.59-CP, 1960); seniority allowances for officials working in underground mining, forest exploitation, lighthouse guard, .. or for those working in the agricultural sector (Circular No.08-LN/TT, 1960; Circular No.24-LD/TT, 1960).

1.3. Minimum wage

In the period 1951- June 1955, the minimum wage was equivalent to the price of 35 kilograms of rice at salary level 1 (Ordinance No.81-SL, 1950).

From July 1955, Decree No 650-TTg and Circular No.1-LD-TT stipulated that the lowest salary to ensure a minimum living standard for an unskilled worker with average health to be able to work normally in

normal working conditions. The government stipulated the lowest salary for the whole country was 26,000 VND per month (salary level 17). The lowest salary of 26,000 VND was implemented in all government agencies and national enterprises. This salary was not enforced in private enterprises. From 1955, the government only paid wages in cash. The trading agencies were responsible for selling and supplying rice, cloth, salt, firewood and maintaining the prices of major commodities to ensure a minimum subsistence (Circular No.1-LD-TT, 1956; Decree No. 650-TTg, 1955). With the minimum wage of 26,000VND, a civil servant can buy 60 kilograms of rice and the rice price was 400VND/kg (Circular No.667-TC-HCP, 1956).

On November 15, 1956, Inter-ministerial Circular No. 21-TT-LB explained and instructed the implementation of the Resolution of the Government Council on salary increases for officials, workers and employees. In particular, since October 1, 1956, the minimum wage had increased to 5%, ie from VND 26,000 to VND 27,300. Allowances were also increased and instructed very clearly in this Circular. Particularly in Hanoi, Hong Gai mine increased by 12%, Hai Phong increased by 8% (Inter-ministerial Circular No. 21-TT-LB, 1956).

From May 1, 1958, the minimum wage, which was 27,300 VND per month, was the salary at level 1 (Decree No.270-TTg, 1958). By Decree No. 25-CP (Decree No.25-CP, 1960), the minimum wage was regulated to be 27.30 VND per month. The minimum wage in 1960 (27.3 VND) was equal to 27,300 VND in 1958 because the monetary policy changed in 1959 when 1000 VND of old money was exchanged for 1 VND of new money (Decree No.095-TTg, 1959).

2. Evaluation of salary policies for civil servants in the period 1951-1960

This 1951-1960 period consisted of 10 years, in which the civil servant salary policy was improved three times and achieved certain results.

The time to change in the salary regime of public-sector employees in 1955 issued 4 salary scales for 4 groups of job titles. The salary scale for civil servants had 17 levels, the highest level was level 1 and the lowest was level 17. This was contrary to the convention of the salary policy in 1948, 1958 and 1960 where the lowest salary was salary level 1. The salary scale in Decree 650-TTg also had coefficients for salary, the minimum salary of 26,000 VND (level 17) had a coefficient of 100 and the highest salary (level 1) had a coefficient of 6.15 times the lowest salary. This salary coefficient convention made the salary scale more logic and salary calculation were easier. This calculation of the coefficient only appears in this Decree 650, not in the salary improvements in 1958 and 1960. There were also many types of allowances at this stage.

The salary policy specified in Decree 270-TTg included 5 salary scales for 5 groups of public-sector employees. In the 21-level salary scale for cadres and civil servants, each job title corresponded to a range of levels (see table 4). Compared with the salary policy in 1955, the salary policy in 1958 was more complicated, each salary scale had more levels in which level 1 was the lowest salary and level 21 was the highest. Each salary grade corresponded to a specific amount of salary, without coefficients as regulated in 1955. Civil servant salary in 1958 was higher than the salary in 1955. Along with the increase in wages, production leadership, market management, and price stability did relatively well, so real wages increased. The promulgation of various allowances, the construction of social welfare services and occupational safety equipment have had the effect of improving the living and working conditions for public-sector employees. The salary regime had initially been planned: Setting up a separate salary fund and a separate social fund, laying the initial basis for salary management, creating favourable conditions for the implementation of economic accounting. However, in the 1958 salary system, there were still unreasonable points: In the administrative field, relying on standards of virtue, talent, and work history to arrange civil servants into a salary scale with many levels and groups of levels, resulting in many salary levels being unsatisfactory for civil servants, unreasonable with their work responsibilities and working capabilities; this salary regime was not consistent with the principle of labour distribution; there were too many types of allowances, so some cases the allowance was higher than the main salary.

The salary policy in 1960 had many improvements, the salary was increased according to the 3-year plan, with the target of a 25% salary increase compared to the average salary in 1957, the rate of salary increased in 1960 was 12.4% of the average salary in 1959. Salary at level 1 between occupations might vary, based on technical complexity, working conditions and the different importance of occupations in the national economy. Salary policy in 1960 included 3 salary tables for cadres and civil servants holding leadership positions, salaries of civil servants holding leadership positions were higher than those were not. Allowances were improved and added at this stage. The content of the salary system in 1960 included many important improvements, which were different from the salary system in 1958. The salary arrangement was complicated work, related to the life and ideology of workers, officials and cadres and have a direct influence on boosting production and working aspects.

The minimum wage specified in 3 decrees in 1955, 1958 and 1960 was respective 26,000 VND; 27,300 VND and 27.3 VND (because 1000 VND of old money was exchanged for 1 VND new currency since 1959). The minimum wage remained fairly stable during the period 1955-1960.

In this stage 1951-1960, the North's economy had not yet recovered, and food shortages began. Famine threatened in some places, the cities were short of rice because the supply from the South of Vietnam was no longer available. From 1955, the State temporarily sold quantitative rice to households in the city. Each city applied a different standard. From the first of March, 1957, the new State implemented a monthly rice supply regime for all soldiers, public officials, students and patients at hospitals, nursing stations... The rice price was kept stable at 40 VND/kg. This "rice book" regime lasted until 1986. Because of this "rice book" policy, the expensive rice allowance was no longer appropriate during this period.

IV. CONCLUSION

The improvement of the salary system has always been a matter of concern to the Vietnamese Government since 1945 until now. The salary policy for civil servants and other state-sector employees must ensure the labour distribution principle to promote the effect of wages on improving labour productivity, encouraging public-sector employees to perform better. In the period 1951-1960, Government and many other state agencies began to pay attention to wage and labour in terms of research and implementation of policies and regimes as well as planning and implementation of plans. The salary regime in this period ensured consistency, increased wages and allowances, contributed to improving living standards and created work motivation for the state workforce. The increase in wages was closely related to all aspects of economic activities in society: production, goods, prices, finance, currency and the situation of war. Therefore, in this period, although there had been a salary increase but not much.

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