

THE FUTURE OF OPEN GOVERNMENT: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN VIETNAM

O FUTURO DO GOVERNO ABERTO: PERSPECTIVAS E DESAFIOS NO VIETNÃ

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the potential and obstacles of adopting open government principles in Vietnam. Utilizing a thorough document analysis of governmental reports, policy directives, and academic documents, the study highlights significant progress through legislative reforms and digital technology adoption in Vietnam. This country is undergoing a shift towards transparent governance, motivated by its strong economic growth and political development. Notwithstanding these progressions, Vietnam encounters various obstacles. These factors encompass discrepancies in technology infrastructure, cultural and institutional opposition, concerns around privacy and security, and limitations in available resources. Furthermore, the challenge of aligning new policies with current legislation and ensuring efficient implementation presents additional complexities. The study suggests that enhancing legal and regulatory frameworks, digital infrastructure, fostering a culture of transparency in public agencies, building inclusive participation methods, and prioritizing anti-corruption measures will help Vietnam overcome obstacles in developing an open government.

Keywords: Open Government, Citizen Engagement, Governance Reform, Policy Implementation, Anti-Corruption.

RESUMO

O artigo examina o potencial e os obstáculos da adoção de princípios de governo aberto no Vietnã. Utilizando uma análise completa de documentos de relatórios governamentais, diretrizes de políticas e documentos acadêmicos, o estudo destaca o progresso significativo por meio de reformas legislativas e adoção de tecnologia digital no Vietnã. Esse país está passando por uma mudança em direção à governança transparente, motivada por seu forte crescimento econômico e desenvolvimento político. Apesar desses avanços, o Vietnã encontra vários obstáculos. Esses fatores abrangem discrepâncias na infraestrutura tecnológica, oposição cultural e institucional, preocupações com privacidade e segurança e limitações nos recursos disponíveis. Além disso, o desafio de alinhar novas políticas com a legislação atual e garantir uma implementação eficiente apresenta complexidades adicionais. O estudo sugere que o aprimoramento das estruturas legais e regulatórias, da infraestrutura digital, a promoção de uma cultura de transparência nos órgãos públicos, a criação de métodos de participação inclusivos e a priorização de medidas anticorrupção ajudarão o Vietnã a superar os obstáculos no desenvolvimento de um governo aberto.

Palavras-chave: Governo aberto, Envolvimento do cidadão, Reforma da governança, Implementação de políticas, Anticorrupção.

Introduction

In a world where information flows more freely than ever before, the concept of open government has emerged as a cornerstone of contemporary governance (Chatwin et al., 2019; Fuks & Kabanov, 2020; Nam, 2015). Defined by its commitment to transparency, accessibility, and public participation, open government has the potential to revolutionize not only how policies are made but also how citizens engage with their political systems (Purwanto et al., 2020; Wijnhoven et al., 2015). Vietnam, with its dynamic economy and evolving political landscape (Jenkins, 2004; Van Long, 2016), stands at the forefront of this transformation as it grapples with the implementation of open government practices.

Vietnam's journey toward open governance is informed by a vision to foster greater public sector efficiency, encourage civic engagement, and build trust between the government and its constituents. As highlighted by global trends and initiatives in other countries, the pursuit of open government has proven to have far-reaching implications for holding governments accountable, driving improvements in public services, and inspiring innovation that can promote social and economic growth (Jetzek et al., 2014; Scassa, 2014).

Yet, the path to a transparent and accountable government in Vietnam is riddled with complexities. The country faces unique challenges stemming from its political structure, bureaucratic traditions, and the readiness of its institutions to embrace change. The balancing act between maintaining governmental integrity and propelling the nation forward with open data, participatory decision-making, and enhanced service delivery remains delicate. The impending question is how Vietnam can navigate these challenges to realize the full potential of open government.

This article seeks to explore the prospects of open government in Vietnam, identifying opportunities for progress and the hurdles that must be overcome. By assessing the current landscape and considering strategies for the future, this piece will offer a nuanced perspective on what lies ahead for the Vietnamese government and its people in their quest for openness and reform.

Research Methods

For this article, our methodological approach is centered on a meticulous document analysis. This qualitative research method involves a thorough examination of pertinent written materials to extract and analyze data concerning the implementation and impact of open government initiatives in Vietnam. We systematically collect and review a variety of documents that include governmental reports, policy directives, regulatory documents, strategic plans, international agreements on open government, scholarly articles, and research papers focused on governance in Vietnam. These texts provide a rich source of secondary data that offer insights into the legal frameworks, policy implementations, and institutional changes driving the open government initiative.

As we delve into these documents, we employ a judiciously crafted set of inclusion criteria to ensure that all sourced material is directly relevant to our research questions. This includes the significance of the document to the concepts of transparency, accountability, and public engagement, as well as its pertinence to

the Vietnamese context, particularly concerning the challenges and opportunities facing the country's open government agenda.

The documents are then subject to a rigorous analysis, following a structured framework designed to capture critical themes such as policy evolution, digitalization efforts, citizenry collaboration, and anti-corruption drives. We conduct a comprehensive content analysis on the collated documents, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitatively, we look at the prevalence of concepts and specific terminologies that align with our research interest, providing a measurable dimension to the discourse in the documents. Qualitatively, we perform a deeper analysis to unravel the context and implications of the textual content, investigating the tone, intent, and underlying messages that are conveyed within the policy narrative.

The final step of this process is the synthesis of our research findings into a cohesive and contextual story regarding the current and anticipated future state of open government in Vietnam. This narrative takes into account the intricate interplays between policy intentions, their real-world applications, and the anticipated trajectory of governance and civic empowerment in the region.

Research results

1. Overview of the process of building open government in Vietnam

The trajectory of governance in Vietnam has been intricately tied to its rich and turbulent history. Emerging from a past marked by dynastic rule and colonialism, Vietnam's governance systems have traditionally been hierarchical and centralized (Marr, 2004). The establishment of a socialist republic in 1945 brought about a new set of governance principles, heavily influenced by Soviet models. Over the decades, however, as Vietnam embarked on its *Đổi Mới* policies in 1986, the country began a significant transformation towards economic liberalization and integration with the global economy. This shift necessitated a rethinking of governance practices. The government recognized that economic growth and sustainable development could be bolstered by increased transparency and

accountability (Van Long & Tan, 2018). As a result, incremental reforms have been instituted to open channels for public participation and to streamline governmental operations.

Despite these changes, the transition towards open governance has been cautious and gradual. Key milestones include the adoption of the Law on the Promulgation of Legal Documents in 1996, which standardized the process of law-making and aimed to increase its transparency. Moreover, the 2001 Ordinance on Grassroots Democracy was among the first legislative efforts to empower citizens at the local level, enabling them to have a say in community affairs and development projects.

The subsequent period saw further legal and institutional reforms supporting openness and transparency. The 2013 Constitution of Vietnam affirmed citizens' rights to access information and guaranteed freedom of speech (Article 25, Vietnam Constitution 2013, 2013). Fast forward to April 2016, the landmark Law on Access to Information officially came into effect, representing a significant leap forward by legally obligating state agencies to provide information, except in cases specified by law.

At present, Vietnam has embarked on several initiatives to embrace open government principles. The push for transparency is evident from the legal framework to the grassroots level, where information is increasingly being made accessible to the public. Building upon legislative efforts, the Vietnamese government has also begun embracing technology to modernize its public sector services. The aim here is not merely to streamline administrative procedures but also to make governance more inclusive and accessible to the general population (Decision No. 942/QD-TTg on Implementing the Strategy for Developing e-Government towards Digital Government, 2021). This push towards e-government services has led to the development of online platforms and the digitization of many government services, allowing for greater engagement and efficiency.

In terms of anti-corruption measures, the revised 2018 Anti-corruption Law demonstrated Vietnam's resolve to align with international standards by introducing provisions for greater scrutiny of assets and incomes of public officials

and creating mechanisms for citizens to participate in corruption control (Thi Thoa, 2023). Additionally, Vietnam has active participation in international treaties and agreements that encourage open governance, such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Institutionally, certain specialized agencies have been established to promote transparency and combat corruption, with entities such as the Government Inspectorate and the Office of the Central Steering Committee on Anti-corruption leading the way (Dung, 2021).

These reforms have signaled Vietnam's commitment to rethinking its governance in the context of global trends towards openness. The evolving legislative framework is a testimony to Vietnam's potential to align its governance practices with the principles of open government. Facing pressures both domestically and internationally to improve governance, protect human rights, and curb corruption, the Vietnamese government has increasingly sought to modernize and open up its decision-making processes to public scrutiny (Chien & Thanh, 2022). Nonetheless, the degree to which these policies and laws have translated into practice varies, reflecting the complex interplay between traditional governance habits and the drive for modernity. As Vietnam continues on this path, the historical patterns of governance provide an insightful backdrop against which the current and future efforts towards openness can be evaluated.

2. Prospects for Open Government in Vietnam

As Vietnam continues to evolve both economically and politically, the implementation of open government initiatives holds promising potential to enhance transparency, foster greater citizen engagement, and drive more effective governance.

Enhanced transparency and accountability are foundational elements of an open government framework, and their implementation can have profound implications for the effectiveness and reliability of governance (Gupta et al., 2020; Hale, 2008). In the context of Vietnam, the pursuit of greater transparency and accountability has the potential to catalyze significant institutional reforms and bolster public trust in government operations. When a government operates

transparently, it diminishes opportunities for corruption and misuse of authority by making activities and decisions visible and understandable to the public (Chen & Ganapati, 2023). This visibility ensures that officials are more likely to act in the public's interest, knowing that their actions are subject to scrutiny. A commitment to accountability further implies that government entities and officials are held responsible for their actions, including the allocation and management of public funds (Natision et al., 2022). Such a system not only deters malfeasance but also encourages more efficient and equitable use of resources. Studies and observations from organizations like Transparency International suggest that the disclosure of budget information, for example, can prevent waste and misappropriation of resources (2023 Corruption Perceptions Index: Explore The... - Transparency.Org, n.d.). In addition, the presence of strong, independent auditing agencies has shown to be effective in many countries at promoting accountable governance and deterring corruption.

For citizen engagement and empowerment, the ethos of open government is irrevocably tied to the principle of participation, wherein governance is not merely a process administered by the state but a collaborative endeavor that actively involves the citizenry (D. J. S. Oliveira & Ckagnazaroff, 2022; Wirtz et al., 2019). This principle champions the notion that informed and engaged citizens are central to the vitality of a democratic society. In Vietnam, where a centralized model of governance has traditionally prevailed, the infusion of participatory methods marks a transformative departure towards creating a more inclusive and dialogic political environment. It is in this vein that Vietnam has the potential to catalyze a fundamental shift towards open governance by embracing digital platforms as instrumental conduits for citizen participation.

The digital sphere offers a plethora of opportunities for enhancing civic engagement, transcending geographical and temporal barriers that have historically impeded the inclusion of broader demographic groups in the governmental process. With the strategic deployment of online forums, social networks, and mobile technologies, a new realm is opened up for interactive civic discourse and consultation. By cultivating these digital spaces for public deliberation, Vietnamese

institutions can actively solicit input from citizens, garnering diverse perspectives on legislation, policy, and service provision. These platforms can serve not just as a sounding board for public opinion, but as a sophisticated ecosystem for collective problem-solving.

Digital engagement tools not only enable the submission of feedback and proposals from the public; they also facilitate greater transparency in the decision-making process itself. When citizens can observe and contribute to policy formulation in virtual environments, it engenders a more democratic form of governance where decisions are a reflection of wide-ranging citizen input (C. Oliveira, 2019; Pfeifer et al., 2021). The construction and adoption of policies become more than a statutory requirement; they transform into a shared venture between government and governed. The merits of this democratization are manifold. Policies that are sculpted in collaboration with the citizenry are inherently more grounded in the lived experiences and actual needs of the public. They are likely to be more equitable, having been subject to the scrutiny and suggestion of a representative cross-section of the populace. In addition, such a collaborative approach can improve the efficacy and sustainability of policies, as citizens who feel a sense of ownership over government decisions are more likely to support and abide by them. Embedding these participatory practices within the Vietnamese governance framework will invariably lead to an empowered citizenry. Empowerment, in this context, is not simply the ability to voice one's opinions; it is the assurance that such opinions will be heard, considered, and potentially actualized into tangible policies and practices. It necessitates establishing steady and transparent feedback mechanisms through which the government can respond to, and act upon, the input received.

For innovations in public service delivery, the drive towards open government heralds a transformative potential that aligns with the core tenets of efficiency, inclusiveness, and citizen-centric governance. The integration of digital solutions across the spectrum of public services is not merely an exercise in modernization; it is a profound rethinking of the government's role as a service provider, aiming to elevate the delivery mechanisms to meet the standards of an

increasingly digital society (Sahur & Amiruddin, 2023). This shift towards open government encompasses an array of innovations, from e-government systems to open Application Programming Interfaces, each fostering a more interactive and responsive relationship between citizens and the state. This digital transformation reshapes the landscape of public services such as tax filing, business registration, license renewals, and access to social welfare programs. By involving citizens in the continuous improvement of services, Vietnam can foster a more collaborative and iterative approach to public service delivery. Engaging with users can help identify and rectify pain points, ensuring services evolve in alignment with the needs and expectations of the public.

Vietnam has great potential to enhance its open government landscape through international cooperation. The paradigm of open governance emphasizes principles of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation (Kurmanov & Knox, 2022), an ethos that aligns with global standards set by multilateral organizations and democratic societies. As the country seeks to integrate these values into its government operations, the symbiosis with international frameworks becomes a critical element in this evolution. The exchange of best practices and knowledge through globally oriented open government initiatives furnishes Vietnamese institutions with a rich repository of insights and methodologies that have been tested across different governance contexts. This cross-pollination of ideas and experiences enhances Vietnam's ability to fine-tune its policies and initiatives to bolster public trust and effective governance. Furthermore, the commitment to international standards and frameworks embeds Vietnamese governance practices within a broader tapestry of global protocols, enabling smoother cooperation with international bodies as well as nations that share a commitment to these open governance objectives.

The convergence of Vietnam's open government initiatives with international engagement also carries significant diplomatic and economic dividends. By demonstrating a commitment to such universally endorsed principles, Vietnam positions itself as a progressive and responsible country on the world stage (Yen & Binh, 2019), which in turn could lead to an influx of foreign investment,

partnerships, and funding opportunities. Economically, this alignment can manifest in greater confidence from international investors and a more favorable ranking on indices that measure ease of doing business and governance quality, further incentivizing foreign direct investment and economic partnerships. Additionally, involvement in international cooperative efforts regarding open governance often comes with financial and technical support, aiding Vietnam in actualizing the infrastructural and institutional reforms necessary for a truly open government. In the sphere of diplomacy, Vietnam can leverage its participation in open governance initiatives as a strategic platform to engage in dialogue and collaboration with a broad array of countries, both within and beyond its traditional sphere of influence. This diplomatic capital is invaluable as it amplifies Vietnam's voice in international forums, allowing it to advocate for its interests, such as fair trade practices or equitable resolution of territorial disputes, more effectively. Through these multilateral engagements, Vietnam does not merely follow but can shape international norms and policies by incorporating its unique perspective and insights.

Nevertheless, embracing international cooperation in open government practices requires a nuanced understanding of the local context. Vietnam must navigate the global principles and suggestions with an eye towards cultural sensitivities and the national socio-political climate, ensuring that any adopted measures are viable and sustainable within its governance ecosystem. This balancing act is crucial; it determines the success of Vietnam in transforming these international ideals into tangible improvements.

3. Challenges of Open Government in Vietnam

While the prospects of open government in Vietnam are significant, there are also substantial challenges that need to be addressed to fully realize its potential. This section outlines some of the primary hurdles and issues that could impede the advancement of open government initiatives within the country.

Technological Infrastructure

Building an all-encompassing technological infrastructure for open government in Vietnam presents a complex set of challenges, as it requires a seamless convergence of varied technical elements with human factors that are equally pivotal to the initiative's success. Initiating such an infrastructure entails a commitment not only to the deployment of both high-speed internet and secure government portals but also ensuring that these digital services are accessible and equitable across the diverse demographic and geographic tapestry of Vietnam.

Developing a sound technological infrastructure necessitates substantial investment in digital networks that ensure reliable and widespread internet access. In the age of information, where the velocity of data exchange and the immediacy of communication are pivotal, the absence of a reliable and fast internet connection could stymie the reach and responsiveness of open government services (Ndou, 2004). Vietnam's varied geographic and socio-economic landscape presents additional layers of complexity to this endeavor, as urban centers may enjoy relatively stable and fast connectivity while rural and remote areas grapple with inadequate access (Duester, 2021), thus widening the digital divide within the country.

Moreover, the infrastructure challenge extends to the design and development of user-friendly e-government platforms that can accommodate the intricacies of various public services—such as permit applications, tax filings, and social welfare programs. The need for such platforms to be intuitive and navigable cannot be overstated, as they serve as the primary interface between the government and citizens in an open government framework. These digital tools

must be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, requiring thoughtful interface design and consideration of different user experiences.

There is, concurrently, an implicit demand for Vietnam to cultivate a workforce proficient in digital skills (Thuan, 2023). These skills are necessary not only for the design, implementation, and maintenance of open government technologies but also for analyzing data and extracting actionable insights. This goes beyond mere technical abilities to comprehend and manipulate technology; it calls for analytical competencies that can understand the ramifications of data-driven policies and engagements.

Cultural and Institutional Resistance

In the context of advancing open government in Vietnam, cultural and institutional inertia is a notable challenge. This inertia arises from a long-standing governance model that has traditionally prioritized stability and centralized decision-making (Vu, 2018). As open government initiatives encourage a shift towards greater transparency and public involvement, there is a need to reconcile these new practices with established norms and procedures. The path Vietnam has trodden in its governance practices has favored uniformity and collective social harmony, values that are deeply rooted in its culture (Dr. Quang Nguyen Van, 2021). Introducing new open government principles calls for a careful balance between innovation and respect for these existing cultural precepts. Encouraging broader citizen participation and the democratization of information necessitates a sensitive approach that acknowledges and integrates the country's rich heritage and social dynamics.

Within governmental institutions, adapting to open government principles involves rethinking some of the traditional processes, which can sometimes be met with apprehension. This is not unusual and is often an initial response to the transition to new ways of operating. Public officials might require time to adjust to the increased transparency and the collaborative approach that open government

espouses (Van Long, 2016). Such transitions are multifaceted and involve both attitudinal and procedural adjustments.

Addressing these inherent hesitations is a task that proceeds best through positive reinforcement and transparent dialogue. By highlighting the advantages of open governance, such as improved service delivery and the fostering of public trust, it becomes possible to illustrate the alignment of open government with national interests (Feller et al., 2011). Inducing change in this manner is a gradual process, equally requiring constructive engagement with all stakeholders involved from the citizenry to the civil servants. Vietnam is in a unique position to carry out this transformation effectively by investing in training and development that prepares government officials for this new governance landscape, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. In doing so, the adoption of open government practices can evolve naturally from within the existing framework, complementing, rather than contradicting, the well-entrenched values and operational norms. Hence, the cultural adaptation and institutional modification that open government entails can be seen as an evolution rather than a criticism of existing structures. It offers a route for enhancing administrative processes and deepening the dialogue between government and citizens, ultimately contributing to the nation's continued development and modernization.

Privacy and Security Concerns

As Vietnam embraces the paradigm of open government, it must carefully navigate the complex terrain of privacy and security concerns. These concerns are especially important in an era where information is as valuable as any tangible resource and safeguarding citizens' personal data becomes a question of fundamental rights (D. C. G. Brown & Toze, 2017; Stoll, 2019). The intersection of privacy and the drive for transparency underpins one of the dichotomies of open government, setting the stage for intricate policymaking that must reconcile the seemingly conflicting objectives of information openness and the protection of individual privacy.

The push for an open government inherently increases the quantity of data flowing from the public to the government, highlighting the need for stringent data handling and protection practices (Attard et al., 2015; Wu, 2014). There is an urgent imperative to ensure that systems and protocols are in place to prevent misuse of data, unauthorized access, and breaches that could lead to exposure of sensitive personal information. This challenge is magnified by the rapid technological advancements that outpace the development of corresponding security measures. For Vietnam, a country on a steadfast path toward digitalization, the capacity to defend against cyber threats, maintain data integrity, and preserve the confidentiality of its citizens' information is a critical concern that must be addressed as part of the open government initiative.

In addition to technological vulnerabilities, the human factor plays a critical role in managing privacy and security within the framework of an open government (Proctor et al., n.d.). This includes cultivating a culture of privacy awareness among government officials, ensuring they understand the implications of data handling, and are equipped to implement best practices in data protection. Moreover, citizens themselves must be educated about their rights and the safekeeping of their personal data to foster a collaborative environment where privacy is seen as a shared responsibility between the state and the individual.

Developing a coherent privacy and security posture for Vietnam's open government also involves creating clear and enforceable policies that delineate the boundaries of data utilization, retention, and dissemination. These policies must provide clear guidance on how data is to be managed and outline the consequences for violations of privacy norms (Bertot et al., 2014). Vigilance in upholding such standards is necessary to maintain public trust - a vital component for the success of any open government initiative. Furthermore, as the government collects and makes data more accessible, it must address the potential risks of re-identification of anonymized data, especially in the case of datasets that, when combined, could inadvertently reveal personal information. This underscores the need for a sophisticated approach to data anonymization and the implementation of robust access controls to sensitive information. The challenge is to build a system that is

secure yet does not unduly stifle the flow of information that is essential for a transparent and accountable government.

Thus, the deliberation over privacy and security within the scope of open government in Vietnam is not merely a matter of fortifying databases against intrusion but also a question of ethical governance and the fundamental respect for civil liberties. The developing legal infrastructure must be crafted to validate the rights of individuals to control their personal information while also empowering the government to perform its duties effectively. Crafting this regulatory balance demands a comprehensive understanding of both the technological landscape and the value of privacy from a societal perspective. Engagement with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including legal experts, technologists, civil society representatives, and the general public, is essential to ensure that policies are not only robust but also reflect the collective will and the diverse needs of the Vietnamese people.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

In the pursuit of establishing an open government, Vietnam faces the intricate task of developing and refining legal and regulatory frameworks that not only enable but also guide the transformation. These frameworks form the bedrock upon which all open government endeavors stand, dictating the parameters within which information is shared, government actions are undertaken, and citizen engagement is facilitated (Huong, 2019). As such, they must be designed to promote accountability, foster transparency, and create an environment conducive to participatory governance.

The crafting of these frameworks is a meticulous process, requiring an astute synthesis of international statutes, domestic laws, and the unique socio-political tapestry of Vietnam. These laws must be articulated with precision, outlining clear-cut definitions and boundaries for data sharing, public sector workflows, and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the governance ecosystem. They must also account for the dynamic nature of technology and social change,

incorporating the flexibility needed to adapt to future innovations and societal shifts.

A significant complication in this legislative process arises from the need to harmonize new open government policies with pre-existing laws, which might not have anticipated the advent of digital governance and the novel scenarios it represents (Mai et al., 2024). For instance, matters concerning public access to information must be balanced with privacy legislation, and the right to freedom of information must be weighed against considerations of national security and public order. Achieving this balance requires forward-thinking legal scholarship and pragmatic policymaking, with a keen eye on maintaining harmony between the old and the new. Moreover, the introduction of legal frameworks in support of open government extends beyond just the enactment of laws. It involves the establishment of legal mechanisms that can enforce these regulations and resolve disputes that may arise from their interpretation or implementation. Vietnam's judicial and administrative systems thus play a crucial role in the operationalization of open government laws, necessitating reforms or expansions in capacity as may be required to handle the increased scope of governance issues presented by these new frameworks.

In summary, Vietnam's challenge is to engineer legal and regulatory frameworks that not only facilitate the implementation of open government initiatives but also embed a culture of openness throughout the governmental ecosystem. It is a continuous process that requires vigilance and adaptability, ensuring that the legal structures evolve harmoniously with societal advancements and the ever-changing digital frontier. Only through such a committed and dynamic approach can the legal foundations of Vietnam's open government be as resilient as they are progressive, supporting the nation in its evolution towards greater transparency, accountability, and public engagement.

Resource Constraints

As Vietnam strides towards the implementation of open government, it cannot escape the stark reality of resource constraints that serve as a pivotal challenge in this ambitious endeavor. Resource constraints in this context encompass not only financial limitations but also the scarcity of skilled human capital and institutional capabilities required to sustain the systemic reforms integral to open governance.

The financial aspect of resource constraints cannot be understated, as establishing and maintaining an open government infrastructure entails significant investments in technology, training, and system overhauls (Zhao & Fan, 2018). For Vietnam, a developing nation with competing priorities and limited budgets, allocating sufficient funds to cover these costs is a complex issue (Trong Vinh & Nhung, 2019). The government must navigate the delicate act of budgeting for open government initiatives while also addressing other critical areas such as health, education, and economic development.

Beyond the monetary aspect, human resources constitute another critical dimension of the constraints faced. The successful deployment of open government initiatives is heavily dependent on individuals with the requisite expertise in IT, data analysis, policy formulation, and project management, among other areas (Mergel, 2015; Müller & Skau, 2015; Puron-Cid, 2014). Vietnam's challenge lies in cultivating a workforce that is not only technically proficient but also adaptable to the changing demands of an open government landscape. This necessitates investment in education, continuous professional development, and the attraction of talent, which can be a daunting task in light of the global competition for skilled professionals.

Institutional capacity also plays a pivotal role within the ambit of resource constraints. Government bodies must possess the structural strength and organizational culture conducive to the ideals of open government (Agbabiaka & Ojo, 2014). This involves transforming traditionally opaque and hierarchical institutions into entities that value transparency, accountability, and interaction with the public. Such a transformation requires a fundamental shift in institutional

ethos, processes, and leadership an undertaking that is both resource-intensive and time-consuming.

The intertwined nature of these resource constraints indicates that addressing them is not merely a matter of increasing budgets or personnel. It requires a holistic strategy that considers the efficient allocation of available resources, strategic partnerships, and innovation in overcoming limitations. For instance, Vietnam can leverage international assistance, public-private partnerships, and technological advancements to bridge some of these resource gaps.

Measuring Impact and Sustaining Engagement

Measuring the impact of open government initiatives and sustaining public engagement present significant challenges in the context of Vietnam's administrative and civic landscape. Open government policies aim to enhance transparency, improve public services, and foster greater citizen participation (Casalino et al., 2013); however, without a robust framework to gauge their effectiveness and maintain active citizen involvement, these initiatives risk becoming transient or ineffective. Establishing metrics for success involves not only tracking the immediate outcomes of policy changes such as increased access to governmental data or improved public service delivery but also assessing long-term effects on governance quality, corruption levels, and public trust. This requires a multidimensional approach to evaluation, incorporating both quantitative measures, like user engagement statistics and service efficiency rates, and qualitative assessments, like citizen satisfaction and perceived transparency.

Furthermore, sustaining public engagement in governance processes demands ongoing efforts to cultivate a culture of participation among citizens and to continually adapt strategies to meet evolving public expectations and technological advancements. Vietnam faces the dual challenge of keeping the populace informed and motivated to participate while ensuring that the platforms for engagement are accessible, user-friendly, and effectively moderated to

encourage constructive contributions. This involves regular updates to digital platforms, proactive public education campaigns, and perhaps most critically, a demonstrated responsiveness to public input, ensuring that citizen feedback leads to observable changes in governance. The task is compounded by the need to reach diverse demographic groups across varying socio-economic and geographic landscapes, each with different levels of access to technology and varying degrees of literacy in digital tools.

In this complex scenario, the role of continuous feedback loops becomes paramount. These loops would not only assess the impact of implemented policies but also refine approaches based on emerging data and changing public expectations (Casalino et al., 2013). Developing a sustainable model for public engagement in Vietnam's open government initiatives requires a commitment to transparency from the government, a willingness to invest in capacity building for both officials and citizens, and an innovative approach to integrating traditional engagement channels with digital platforms. The ultimate goal is to create a resilient, participatory framework that not only withstands changing political and economic climates but also grows stronger over time, thereby reinforcing the foundations of a truly open government.

Discussion and recommendations

Vietnam's move towards open government is driven by the potential to improve transparency, increase civic engagement, and innovate in public service delivery. These changes are expected to foster a more accountable government and enhance the public's trust, which is crucial for the stability and effectiveness of any governance model. However, achieving these benefits is contingent upon overcoming substantial obstacles including technological limitations, cultural and institutional inertia, privacy and security concerns, and the need for robust legal frameworks.

The technology to facilitate open government is advancing rapidly, yet the uneven distribution of digital infrastructure could hinder comprehensive national

implementation (Tu Thi Thoa & Nguyen Duc Cuong, 2022). While urban areas might quickly benefit from these initiatives, rural and less developed regions could lag behind, potentially exacerbating existing disparities. Overcoming this challenge requires not just investment in technology but also a commitment to ensuring that all citizens have equitable access to the tools necessary for participation. Cultural and institutional resistance is another significant barrier. The shift toward open government requires a fundamental change in mindset from both the public and government officials - moving from a traditional hierarchical structure to one that is more collaborative and transparent (P. R. Brown, 2017). This transition may be met with resistance due to entrenched bureaucratic practices and the potential threat it poses to established power structures. Moreover, as Vietnam opens up its governmental data and processes, ensuring the privacy and security of citizen information becomes paramount. The potential for misuse of data could lead to resistance against open government initiatives. Developing a stringent regulatory framework that protects individual rights while promoting transparency will be essential.

Vietnam's commitment to open government is not just a commitment to policy shifts but to a transformative vision of governance. The assessment of its journey is an assessment of both the tangible outcomes and the intangible shifts in the relationship between state and citizen. Whether these efforts will coalesce to form a robust, participatory framework capable of withstanding the tides of political and economic change is a question that will unravel in the fullness of time. With astute policy direction, inclusive engagement strategies, and adaptive learning from within and outside its borders, Vietnam could indeed set a regional benchmark for what the future of open government might entail.

To realize the vision of open government in Vietnam, a robust set of recommendations and strategies focused on legal, technological, cultural, and participatory domains is essential. Continuous reinforcement and evolution of legal frameworks will create a solid base for transparency and citizen engagement (Tu Thi Thoa & Nguyen Duc Cuong, 2022). Refinements to the Law on Access to Information are of particular importance, ensuring that its guidelines are clear,

actionable, and, most importantly, enforceable. Simultaneously, the inception of substantive data protection and privacy legislation is critical in the digital era, to maintain citizen trust in the government's digitalization initiatives. This fosters an environment where personal data is respected and safeguarded, thereby encouraging greater interaction with e-government platforms.

The enhancement of digital infrastructure stands out as another cornerstone strategy. Adequate investment is necessary to create and maintain equitable access to digital government services, mitigating the urban-rural divide. To support this, digital literacy programs should be bolstered to build the public's capability to engage with digital tools and platforms effectively.

A cultural paradigm shift within public institutions is also indispensable. Transparency is not merely a regulatory obligation but should be an ingrained institutional value (Hovell, 2009). Authorities need to meticulously implement open data policies which compel government agencies to publish datasets in a manner that is readily accessible and usable by the public. An operational shift is required to train public officials in the principles of openness, responsiveness, and accountability, moving away from traditional opacity in governance realms.

Forging an inclusive participatory framework is another critical recommendation. This involves integrating non-governmental organizations, and the private sector in policy formulation and decision-making. Such inclusion ensures diverse perspectives are considered and the resulting policies carry a shared sense of ownership and alignment with societal needs. Moreover, the establishment of continuous feedback mechanisms on government services and policy execution can elevate public participation from an intermittent input to an ongoing, dynamic dialogue.

The national commitment to a zero-tolerance approach against corruption must be unequivocal. Vigorous enforcement of anti-corruption laws coupled with the introduction of new measures for prevention, detection, and prosecution will deter corrupt practices (Hovell, 2009; Tuchak, 2022). In conjunction, protective laws for whistleblowers are necessary to embolden individuals to come forward with information on corruption without the fear of revenge or persecution.

To ensure these strategies yield tangible results, Vietnam must also establish a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system. This system should be designed to objectively assess the effectiveness and impact of open government initiatives. An independent body or designated government agencies should be responsible for this oversight role. Such scrutiny not only helps in identifying areas for improvement but also in demonstrating the government's commitment to achieving the core values of open governance.

Embracing these recommendations with sustained commitment and strategic action will create a strong foundation for Vietnam's journey toward an accountable, participatory, and transparent government. Bringing citizens to the heart of governance processes, Vietnam can forge a resilient and dynamic governance model that thrives on the open exchange of information, widespread citizen involvement, and a steadfast dedication to the public good. This ongoing transformation is complex and multifaceted, but it holds the promise of a governance system that stands ready to meet the emerging challenges of the future while harnessing the potential of its people.

Conclusion

The future trajectory of open government in Vietnam is contingent upon a complex interplay of political will, societal engagement, and technological advancement. As Vietnam continues to integrate into global systems through trade, diplomacy, and information exchange, the opportunities and challenges intrinsic to open government practices gain greater prominence. The prospects for enhancing transparency within state apparatus, deepening citizen participation in decision-making, and cultivating multi-sectoral collaboration are profound. These elements are indispensable to fostering a governance model that is resilient, responsive, and reflective of an increasingly connected and informed citizenry. However, the journey towards realizing the full potential of open government is fraught with challenges. The institutional inertia against transformative change, the digital divide within the population, and the balancing of stakeholder interests present hurdles

that require careful navigation. To surmount these obstacles, it is imperative for Vietnamese policymakers to cement an enduring commitment to the principles of openness and inclusivity.

The Vietnamese government has shown signs of willingness to embrace open government tenets, and ongoing efforts advocate optimism. However, the sustainability of these reforms is dependent on continuous vigilance, iterative improvement, and an unwavering resolve to place citizens at the heart of governance processes. As Vietnam strides forward, the synthesis of lessons learned, the leveraging of technological innovations, and the strengthening of civil society will dictate the effectiveness and maturity of open government practices. In the balance, the future of open government in Vietnam presents a vista filled with opportunities for progress and an imperative to address the challenges head-on in the pursuit of an equitable, participative, and transparent governance structure for the next era.

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