

Improving the Quality of Commune-Level Administrative Work in the Context of Digital Transformation: International Lessons and Implications for Viet Nam

Le Thi Thanh Binh, PhD

Institute of Human Geography and Sustainable Development

Email: binhtb.ducha@gmail.com

Abstract: Digital transformation is fundamentally reshaping the organisation, operation, and service-delivery modalities of local governments. In this process, the commune level is the tier of government closest to citizens, directly handling numerous administrative procedures, implementing policies, and receiving feedback from communities. The quality of commune-level administrative work is therefore reflected not only in the speed of processing applications but also in the capacity to ensure equitable access, information transparency, inter-agency coordination, data security, accountability, and citizen satisfaction. This article employs document review, policy analysis, comparative analysis of international experience, and synthetic reasoning. Drawing on a citizen-centred digital-government approach, the study identifies five components that determine the quality of commune-level administration in a digital environment: (i) digital infrastructure and platforms; (ii) redesigned administrative procedures; (iii) data, digital identity, and interoperability; (iv) the digital capacity and public-service culture of officials; and (v) digital inclusion, citizen participation, and public trust. Estonia's experience demonstrates the importance of interoperable data architecture, digital identity, and the "once-only" principle; South Korea offers insights into a whole-of-government approach, proactive services, and data-driven governance; while India provides important lessons in platformising grassroots governance, digitising planning, budgeting, and accounting, and implementing reforms adaptively in diverse local contexts. On this basis, the article proposes a policy framework for Viet Nam that emphasises standardisation without rigid uniformity; the restructuring of services around citizen journeys; the development of shared data and controlled data-sharing mechanisms; the professionalisation of commune officials' digital capabilities; the narrowing of digital divides; and the establishment of an outcome-based quality measurement system. The recommendations underscore that digital transformation should not be understood merely as "putting paper-based procedures online," but rather as a governance reform aimed at creating public value, strengthening service capacity, and reinforcing social trust.

Keywords: digital transformation; commune-level administration; digital government; online public services; administrative quality; Viet Nam.

1. Introduction

Digital transformation in the public sector has progressed beyond the digitisation of isolated activities towards the comprehensive restructuring of governance and public-service delivery. The United Nations E-Government Survey 2024 indicates positive trends in the development of digital government worldwide, while also identifying a persistent gap between digital capacity at the national level and that at the local-government level. This gap is particularly important because local governments are often citizens' first point of contact with the state (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2024).

In Viet Nam, Decision No. 749/QĐ-TTg, issued on 3 June 2020, approved the National Digital Transformation Programme to 2025, with orientations towards 2030, identifying the development of digital government, the digital economy, and the digital society as core directions. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of national directions can only be tested through the actual experiences of citizens and businesses at the grassroots level. The commune level both receives and processes routine administrative procedures and connects government with residential communities, social organisations, and vulnerable groups. Accordingly, the quality of commune-level administration constitutes a direct test of the state's capacity to realise a service-oriented government in the digital environment.

Research on digital transformation at the commune level often focuses on the availability of infrastructure, the proportion of online applications, or the number of officials trained. These indicators are necessary but insufficient. A commune with a public-service portal may still deliver low-quality services if forms are difficult to understand, internal processes remain manual, data are not interoperable, officials lack the capacity to handle digital situations, or older persons and those with limited digital skills cannot access services. Conversely, a locality with limited resources may improve service quality when it selects appropriate priorities, designs simple procedures, and maintains direct-support mechanisms for citizens.

Based on this observation, the article addresses three questions. First, through which dimensions should the quality of commune-level administrative work be assessed in the context of digital transformation? Second, what lessons do Estonia, South Korea, and India offer for grassroots administrative governance? Third, which priorities should Viet Nam pursue to ensure that digital transformation genuinely improves service quality rather than merely increasing the use of technology? The article contributes an integrated analytical framework that connects technology with procedural reform, data governance, public-service capacity, and digital equity.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Research Methods

2.1. Digital Transformation and the Quality of Commune-Level Administration

Digital transformation in the public sector is not synonymous with simple computerisation. Computerisation primarily replaces some manual tools with software; digitisation converts documents and data from physical to digital formats; whereas digital transformation entails changes in operating models, decision-making processes, and state–citizen relations based on technology and data. From the OECD perspective, digital government should be understood as government that is “digital by design,” data-driven, platform-based, open by default where appropriate, user-driven, and proactive in service delivery (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020b).

In this study, the quality of commune-level administrative work is understood as the extent to which the commune administrative apparatus exercises its authority lawfully, promptly, effectively, transparently, fairly, and responsively to citizens’ legitimate needs under given resource constraints. This quality can be assessed through six dimensions: legal validity; process efficiency; accessibility; transparency and accountability; data security and protection; and citizen satisfaction and trust.

This understanding avoids two reductionist tendencies. The first is technological determinism, which assumes that investing in equipment or uploading applications to an online portal will automatically generate quality. The second is target-driven thinking, which emphasises only online-processing rates without considering whether citizens can independently complete procedures, receive results on time, and reduce transaction costs. Successful digital transformation must create public value: it should reduce time, costs, and errors; enhance oversight; expand access; and improve the quality of governmental decision-making.

2.2. Analytical Framework

This article employs a framework comprising five mutually reinforcing components.

First, digital infrastructure and platforms are the physical and technical conditions, including broadband connectivity, end-user devices, shared software, digital signatures, repositories, electronic identification, and continuity of operations. However, infrastructure investment should be assessed in terms of reliability, interoperability, usability, and maintenance costs rather than solely by the number of computers or software applications.

Second, process redesign is essential. Technology creates value only when procedures are simplified, standardised, and stripped of unnecessary requirements. Online public services should be designed around the user journey, minimise repeated declarations, provide clear instructions and application-status notifications, and offer support channels when errors occur.

Third, data and interoperability are fundamental. Population, land, civil-status, social-protection, and procedural data constitute the foundation of digital administration. Administrative quality improves when agencies can use verified data to reduce paperwork for citizens. This must, however, be accompanied by principles of access control, data minimisation, access logging, and privacy protection.

Fourth, digital capacity and public-service culture are indispensable. Commune officials need not only software-use skills but also competencies in data governance, digital communication, incident resolution, risk assessment, and citizen guidance. A digital public-service culture is demonstrated through proactivity, accountability, respect for users, compliance with security procedures, and willingness to learn.

Fifth, digital inclusion and participation must be assured. Citizens are not a homogeneous group. Differences in age, income, gender, educational attainment, place of residence, access to devices, and disability may result in digital exclusion. Digital services should therefore be combined with in-person assistance, community support, accessible design, and multichannel feedback.

2.3. Research Methods

This article adopts a qualitative research design combining four methods. First, document analysis is used to systematise theories of digital government, data governance, and public-service quality. Second, policy-document analysis identifies digital-transformation directions in Viet Nam. Third, comparative case-study analysis is conducted for Estonia, South Korea, and India. The three cases were selected for their diversity in scale, institutional arrangements, and levels of development: Estonia represents a model of digital architecture and interoperable services; South Korea stands out for comprehensive digital government; and India offers valuable lessons on digitising grassroots governance in the context of a large population and diverse regions. Fourth, synthetic reasoning is employed to translate these experiences into conditional recommendations for Viet Nam.

The study has limitations. It is a literature review and policy analysis and does not conduct surveys or interviews in specific communes. The proposed implications should therefore be further tested through empirical research across regions, types of communes, and different groups of public-service users.

3. Current Situation and Key Challenges in Viet Nam

The national digital transformation agenda has established a direction for the simultaneous development of digital government, the digital economy, and the digital society. Digital infrastructure, digital platforms, digital data, digital safety and trust, and digital human resources are identified as foundational conditions (Prime Minister of Viet Nam, 2020). For grassroots administrative governance, this process involves not only moving records and documents from paper-based to electronic environments, but also reforming work organisation, public-service delivery, and interactions between government and citizens.

Viet Nam has achieved several positive results in telecommunications infrastructure and Internet access. According to data reported in 2024, 4G networks covered approximately 99.8% of Viet Nam’s population, while the proportion of households using fibre-optic broadband Internet reached 82.2% by May 2024. These indicators suggest that connectivity conditions for implementing

digital government and online public services have improved substantially, although the stability and quality of access may still vary across localities (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2024; Vietnam Television, 2024).

At the commune level, digital transformation is manifested through the operation of One-Stop-Shop Units; the use of document-management and administrative-management systems; the electronic receipt, monitoring, and return of results for administrative procedures; the digitisation of dossiers and administrative-procedure results; the use of official digital signatures; and the gradual connection to and use of data from national and sectoral databases in accordance with regulations. These applications have the potential to shorten document-processing cycles, improve the tracking of application status, enhance process transparency, and reduce citizens' travel costs.

Nevertheless, national statistics on online public services should be interpreted with caution. Indicators such as the proportion of administrative procedures available fully online, the proportion of applications submitted online, and the proportion of citizens who actually use online public services are distinct and cannot substitute for one another. Findings from PAPI 2023 show that citizen use of public-service portals remains limited: approximately 8.3% of respondents reported having used the National Public Service Portal, while 7.6% had used provincial public-service portals to complete procedures for themselves or their families. Some users also expressed privacy concerns when using public-service portals. This suggests that the mere presence of online platforms does not automatically translate into effective and trusted use by citizens (Centre for Community Support and Development Studies [CECODES], Real-Time Analytics [RTA], & United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024).

Regarding the quality of administrative services, the 2023 Satisfaction Index of Public Administration Services (SIPAS 2023) reached 82.66%, an increase of 2.58 percentage points from 2022. Results across the 63 provinces and centrally governed cities ranged from 75.03% to 90.61%, with Quang Ninh recording the highest score and Bac Kan the lowest. The difference between these two values was therefore 15.58 percentage points. However, SIPAS reflects assessments at the provincial level and should not be interpreted directly as a separate indicator of commune-level administrative quality. Even so, the variation among localities suggests notable differences in implementation capacity, infrastructure conditions, service quality, and responsiveness to citizens' needs (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024).

Based on implementation practice, five major groups of issues can be identified in efforts to improve the quality of commune-level administrative work in the context of digital transformation.

3.1. Technology Infrastructure and Local Operational Capacity

Although telecommunications and fibre-optic coverage have expanded, the capacity to utilise infrastructure at the commune level remains uneven. Connection quality, end-user devices, scanners, specialised software, digital signatures, maintenance capacity, and technical support directly affect the continuity of administrative-procedure processing. In rural, mountainous, remote, and disadvantaged areas, unstable connectivity and limited equipment may result in interrupted operations, delayed results, or a return to paper-based procedures.

Another important issue is the availability of on-site technical support. Most communes do not have sufficiently capable specialised information-technology units to rapidly address device failures, account problems, network disruptions, or difficulties in data interoperability. Infrastructure investment must therefore be accompanied by technical-support mechanisms organised by local clusters; clearly designated focal points for receiving and resolving incidents; contingency procedures for system interruptions; and basic operational guidance for officials who process applications directly.

3.2. Service Processes Not Yet Fully Citizen-Centred

Some online public services are still designed primarily around internal management requirements rather than citizens' procedural journeys. Electronic forms may be lengthy; guidance may use technical or legalistic language; and requirements for accounts, authentication, digital signatures, and document uploads can create barriers for people with limited experience in using technology. These constraints may increase demand for direct support at One-Stop-Shop Units or lead citizens to abandon online procedures.

Surveys and analyses related to e-governance in Viet Nam indicate that the proportion of citizens directly using public-service portals remains low. This suggests that effectiveness should not be assessed solely by the number of services placed online or the number of applications received through systems. It should also measure citizens' ability to complete procedures independently, ease of use, the number of times applications must be supplemented, actual processing time, and satisfaction after receiving results (CECODES et al., 2024).

Accordingly, services need to be redesigned in accordance with a user-centred principle. Each procedure should be reviewed to reduce unnecessary information fields, reuse data lawfully, provide guidance in clear language, display processing progress, and offer support channels for citizens encountering difficulties. Digital transformation creates genuine value only when it reduces the time, travel, and uncertainty that citizens experience when accessing services.

3.3. Workload Pressures and the Digital Capacity of Commune Officials

The commune level is the tier of government that engages directly with citizens and addresses many of their daily administrative needs. Commune officials commonly have to perform professional duties, receive and guide applicants, update data, process electronic documents, coordinate with higher-level agencies, and fulfil reporting requirements at the same time. In this context, the use of multiple unintegrated platforms, operational systems, or specialised software may increase the number of required operations, create a risk of duplicate data entry, and intensify pressure to meet deadlines.

Digital capacity should be understood more broadly than the ability to operate software. Commune officials need the ability to use government systems, manage electronic dossiers, access data within their authority, communicate with citizens in digital settings, identify information-security risks, and handle emerging situations. Training and professional development should therefore be linked to job positions and practical scenarios rather than confined to introducing software functions. Mechanisms are also needed for post-training assessment, peer support, and periodic skills updates.

In addition to technical competence, a digital public-service culture is decisive. Officials need to shift from a mindset of completing internal procedures to one of helping citizens complete procedures lawfully, conveniently, and safely. Every report of difficulty in submitting applications, interface errors, or lengthy waiting times should be treated as input for service improvement.

3.4. Data Governance, Interoperability, and Information Security

Administrative data at the grassroots level include substantial amounts of sensitive information related to personal identity, civil status, land, assets, social protection, and administrative dossiers. Digital transformation can therefore be sustainable only when accompanied by responsible data governance. Core requirements include clearly assigning responsibility for creating, updating, and verifying data quality; authorising access according to job positions; logging key actions; backing up data; protecting equipment; and establishing procedures for incident response and reporting.

Information-security risks now arise not only from technical attacks but also from unsafe practices, such as sharing accounts, using weak passwords, opening fraudulent files or links, using unprotected personal devices, and copying data in violation of regulations. Reports on cybersecurity in Viet Nam continue to record a substantial number of cyberattack incidents, underscoring the need to strengthen prevention, detection, and incident-response capacity in public agencies, including local governments (Authority of Information Security, 2024).

Data interoperability is another challenge. When information already exists lawfully within public agencies but cannot be used because of technical standards, connection procedures, or limits on authority to share data, citizens may still be required to submit the same documents again. This reduces the practical benefits of digital services. The principle of data reuse should therefore be progressively implemented while ensuring that data sharing has a legal basis, serves the correct purpose, remains within an appropriate scope, and respects privacy rights.

3.5. Digital Divides and the Requirement for Inclusion

Digital divides remain a significant challenge in modernising commune-level administration. Older persons, persons with disabilities, low-income persons, people with limited educational attainment, migrant workers, ethnic minority communities, and residents of areas with difficult connectivity conditions may face greater obstacles in using digital services. PAPI 2023 findings indicate that Internet access has improved, with nearly 80% of survey respondents reporting Internet use at home; nevertheless, actual use of online public services remains low. This indicates that Internet access is a necessary but insufficient condition for effective participation in e-governance (CECODES et al., 2024).

Commune-level administrative digital transformation should therefore be implemented through a multichannel and inclusive approach. Online services should be the preferred convenient option, but they should not abruptly replace all forms of direct support. One-Stop-Shop Units need to retain their guidance role, while community digital technology teams, mass organisations, and support networks in villages and neighbourhoods can help improve citizens' digital skills. Interfaces and instructional materials should be comprehensible and accessible for users with different levels of digital capacity. The objective is to expand access to public services rather than turn technology into a condition for exclusion.

4. International Experience

4.1. Estonia: Data Interoperability, Digital Identity, and Proactive Services

Estonia is frequently recognised as a pioneering country in digital government. According to the OECD, most public services in Estonia can be delivered online, except for certain transactions that require physical presence or special safeguards, such as marriage, divorce, and real-estate transactions (OECD, 2020a). The core value of this case does not lie in providing a large number of information portals, but in the governance architecture that enables agencies to exchange data securely, authentically, and under controlled conditions.

The first lesson is the foundational role of digital identity. When citizens have a trusted means of identification, services can be personalised, while identity verification, digital signing, and access to records become more convenient. Digital identity, however, should not be understood as a surveillance tool; it must operate alongside personal-data protection, traceability mechanisms, and accountability.

The second lesson is the once-only principle. Public agencies should require citizens to provide a piece of information only when that information does not already lawfully exist or cannot be accessed in accordance with regulations. This requires agencies to move from a mindset of local data ownership to one of data sharing based on clearly defined purposes, standards, and authorities.

The third lesson is that services should become proactive. Rather than merely waiting for citizens to search for procedures, government can notify them of entitlements, deadlines, or obligations when data availability and legal provisions permit. At the commune level in Viet Nam, this approach could be applied cautiously to notifications of application status, appointments, social-protection support, document-expiry reminders, or guidance on procedures associated with life events.

4.2. South Korea: A Whole-of-Government Approach and User-Oriented Governance

South Korea is among the countries ranked as leaders in GovTech by the World Bank. Its 2021–2025 Digital Government Master Plan emphasises a whole-of-government approach, an administrative system that is simple, effective, and transparent, and citizen-centred services (World Bank, 2022). South Korea's experience underscores that digital transformation cannot be treated solely as a task for information-technology units. It requires cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms, common standards, clearly assigned responsibilities, and effective connections between central and local government.

At the commune level, this experience highlights the need for shared platforms, standardised data, and clearly defined coordination procedures between communes and higher-level agencies, rather than allowing each locality to develop fragmented applications independently.

Another important point is that user experience should be regarded as a measure of reform. A high-quality service is not the one that contains the greatest number of authentication steps; rather, it is one that enables citizens to complete their affairs lawfully with the fewest steps, the lowest costs, and the least uncertainty. Commune governments should therefore regularly measure actual processing time, the proportion of applications requiring supplementation, the number of trips citizens must make, the rate of successful self-completion, and satisfaction across different population groups.

The South Korean case also demonstrates the role of data in administration. Data should not merely serve reporting purposes; it should help identify bottlenecks, forecast demand, allocate resources, and improve services. The use of data must, however, adhere to the principles of legality, necessity, security, and non-discrimination.

4.3. India: Platformising Grassroots Governance and Adaptive Implementation

India differs substantially from Estonia and South Korea in its conditions, yet it offers practical lessons for grassroots governance. The eGramSwaraj platform was developed under the e-Panchayat project to strengthen the digitisation of local self-government institutions. The system integrates planning, progress reporting, work-based accounting, asset management, monitoring, and certain payment linkages (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, n.d.).

The first lesson is the importance of selecting the right core processes for digitisation. eGramSwaraj did not begin by digitising every service that could potentially be digitised. Instead, it focused on a chain of activities with direct governance significance: planning, budgeting, accounting, implementation, monitoring, and reporting. This improves transparency and generates data for oversight. In Viet Nam, communes could prioritise the seamless digitisation of high-frequency processes, those requiring extensive inter-agency coordination, those prone to repeated paperwork, or those with strong requirements for public disclosure.

The second lesson is to develop a common platform while ensuring adaptability. India displays wide variation in local conditions, languages, administrative capacity, and digital connectivity. A unified platform must therefore be accompanied by guidance, training, technical support, and implementation arrangements suited to local circumstances. This experience is relevant to Viet Nam, where differences in digital capacity remain substantial among urban, delta, mountainous, island, and community settings.

The third lesson is to link digitisation with financial transparency and community oversight. When plans, implementation progress, and expenditures are recorded consistently, government can strengthen accountability, while citizens and higher-level authorities gain a better basis for monitoring. Nevertheless, data disclosure must be accompanied by data classification and personal-information protection.

4.4. Comparative Implications

All three experiences confirm that grassroots digital transformation cannot succeed through technology investment alone. Estonia illustrates the value of trusted infrastructure and data interoperability; South Korea demonstrates the necessity of whole-of-government coordination and the measurement of user experience; and India shows the feasibility of implementing grassroots-governance platforms at scale when common standards are combined with adaptive support. Their common elements are leadership, a legal framework, reliable data, human resources, and citizen participation.

However, these models cannot be copied mechanically. Viet Nam needs to take account of differences in institutions, decentralisation, budgetary resources, levels of digital readiness, existing databases, and population characteristics. International lessons are valuable only when translated into context-appropriate design principles supported by a roadmap, piloting, evaluation, and adjustment.

5. Policy Recommendations for Viet Nam

5.1. Standardise the Architecture While Ensuring Local Flexibility

A commune-level digital architecture framework aligned with the national digital architecture should be developed and operated. It should clearly specify data standards, interoperability standards, security standards, a catalogue of shared platforms, and operational responsibilities. Standardisation helps reduce fragmentation, avoid duplicative investment, and facilitate interoperability. However, standardisation does not mean imposing one interface or one operating model on every commune. Localities need room to adapt communication, user support, service priorities, and focal-point arrangements to their population characteristics and local conditions.

Central and provincial authorities should be responsible for providing or coordinating shared core infrastructure, such as digital identity, digital signatures, integration platforms, dossier-management systems, information-security arrangements, and data repositories. Communes should focus on organising implementation, updating data within their authority, assisting citizens, and using data to improve services. This division of responsibilities prevents communes from having to independently bear technological challenges that exceed their capacities.

5.2. Restructure Procedures Around Citizen Journeys

Before any procedure is moved into a digital environment, it should be reviewed from the user's perspective: where citizens begin, what they need to know, what information they must provide, which data can be reused, how long the process takes, where support is available, and what to do if an error occurs. Internal steps that do not create value for citizens should be eliminated; lawfully available data should be reused instead of requiring repeated document submission; the number of information fields should be reduced; plain language should be used; and application status should be transparently trackable.

For example, for certification or civil-registration procedures within commune authority, the system should prefill verified data where permitted by law, clearly identify any missing documents, specify an appointment or result-return time, and provide instructions through images or short videos. When citizens cannot complete procedures independently, One-Stop-Shop Units, community digital technology teams, or remote-support channels should provide assistance without allowing that assistance to become a source of dependency.

5.3. Develop Responsible Data Governance

Viet Nam needs to shift from the objective of creating many databases to the governance of the full data life cycle: accurate data creation, standardisation, quality verification, authorised access, purpose-limited sharing, updating, storage, and disposal in accordance with regulations. Each commune should establish internal procedures for data responsibility, identifying who may enter, amend, approve, access, and extract data. All significant actions should be logged to enable review when necessary.

The once-only principle should be implemented progressively, based on data readiness and accuracy. Where automated data sharing is not yet possible, agencies should publicly explain the reasons and adopt measures that reduce inconvenience for citizens. Citizens should not be made responsible for a lack of interoperability among public systems.

The protection of privacy must accompany data use. Officials should receive training on recognising scams, password management, digital signatures, device use, file transmission and receipt, data backup, and incident reporting. Information security should be considered an indicator of public-service quality rather than solely a responsibility of technical units.

5.4. Establish a Digital Competency Framework and a Digital Public-Service Culture

A digital competency framework for commune officials should be issued or further refined according to job positions. It should include competence in using government platforms; processing electronic dossiers; governing and using data; communicating with and assisting citizens online; information security; digital ethics; and process improvement. Training should be differentiated by initial competency levels, avoiding uniform training that does not correspond to work functions.

In particular, professional-development programmes should be built around real-world situations: an application malfunctioning, inconsistent data, a citizen without a digital-identity account, an accessibility-support request from a person with a disability, a data-leak incident, or negative feedback on digital platforms. Training should be followed by practical performance assessment and monitoring of workplace improvement, rather than merely issuing participation certificates.

A digital public-service culture should prioritise service responsibility over a mindset focused only on managing the system. Officials should regard every interface error, extended waiting period, or unclear piece of information as a concrete obstacle for citizens. Heads of Commune People's Committees should be accountable for improvements in service quality, not only for the completion rate of technical tasks.

5.5. Promote Digital Inclusion and the Co-Design of Services

Commune-level digital transformation should adopt a multichannel model: online channels should be the preferred option where appropriate, but direct assistance should not be eliminated. Help desks, telephone guidance, visual materials, mobile assistance in villages and hamlets, and cooperation with community digital technology teams, mass organisations, schools, postal services, or libraries should be maintained. Support activities should prioritise older persons, persons with disabilities, people living in poverty, and groups at risk of exclusion.

Service design should incorporate co-design mechanisms: citizens, household businesses, village officials, mass organisations, and vulnerable groups should be invited to test services before their widespread rollout. Feedback should not be collected only through end-of-process forms; it should be analysed to improve interfaces, guidance, and coordination rules. This approach shifts citizens from being service recipients to becoming partners in improving public services.

5.6. Innovate Measurement and Quality-Assurance Mechanisms

Commune-level assessment systems need to move from input and quantity indicators towards the measurement of outcomes. The proposed indicator set comprises five groups: (i) accessibility, including the proportion of citizens able to complete procedures independently and the level of support for vulnerable groups; (ii) efficiency, including actual processing time, number of trips, rates of supplementary applications, and transaction costs; (iii) transparency, including the ability to track applications and the disclosure of procedures and results; (iv) reliability, including the rate of stable service operation, information security, and complaint handling; and (v) social outcomes, including satisfaction, trust, and perceptions of fairness.

These indicators should be periodically disclosed internally so that leaders, officials, and communities can monitor them together. Numerical targets should not be used to create pressure to beautify the data. Instead, localities should be encouraged to identify problems, report them honestly, and improve continuously. Independent assessments or random user surveys can be conducted to compare administrative reports with users' actual experiences.

6. Implementation Roadmap

In the short term, priorities should include reviewing high-frequency services; standardising electronic procedures; assessing infrastructure, data, and skills; correcting faults that cause interruptions; providing citizen support at One-Stop-Shop Units; and establishing a minimum quality-indicator dashboard. At this stage, the objective is not to digitise every activity, but to perform well in the processes that have the clearest impact on citizens.

In the medium term, data interoperability should be strengthened; data reuse should be applied in accordance with regulations; knowledge repositories for officials and citizens should be developed; job-based professional-development programmes should be expanded; and satisfaction measurement should be integrated into the improvement cycle. Localities should pilot implementation in communes with differing characteristics in order to assess appropriateness before scaling up.

In the long term, commune-level government should develop towards a proactive, data-driven, and inclusive model. Services should be personalised within legal limits; citizens should be able to monitor, interact with, and evaluate services; data should support demand forecasting; and public officials should possess digital-governance capacity, digital ethics, and an innovation-oriented mindset. This is a process of institutional, organisational, and cultural reform, rather than an isolated technology project.

7. Conclusion

Improving the quality of commune-level administrative work in the context of digital transformation is a strategically important requirement for building a service-oriented government in Viet Nam. The commune level is where citizens most directly recognise whether the state is convenient, transparent, fair, and trustworthy. Digital transformation should therefore be evaluated by changes in citizen experience and the effectiveness of public-service implementation, rather than solely by the number of devices, software applications, or online dossiers.

The experiences of Estonia, South Korea, and India demonstrate that the common foundations of success include interoperable digital architecture, reliable data, coherent coordination, user-centred services, public-service capacity, and inclusion. For Viet Nam, six priority solution areas are: standardising architecture while retaining local flexibility; redesigning procedures around citizen journeys; responsible data governance; developing digital capacity and a digital public-service culture; ensuring digital inclusion; and measuring quality on the basis of outcomes.

In essence, technology is only a means. The ultimate value of digital transformation in commune-level administration lies in enabling citizens to access rights and public services more easily, helping officials work more accurately and efficiently, and enabling government to make decisions more transparently and responsibly. When these conditions are ensured, digital transformation can become a substantive driver of improved local governance quality and strengthened social trust.

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