

The Scientific And Technological Research Capacity Of The Vietnamese Trade Union And Some Issues Raised

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Abstract:

In the context of globalization and the rapid development of science and technology (S&T), enhancing S&T research capacity has become a crucial factor for organizations, including the Vietnamese Trade Union. The role of the Trade Union is not only limited to protecting workers' rights but also requires active participation in research and application of S&T to help improve working conditions, increase production efficiency, and enhance the lives of workers. However, the S&T research capacity of Trade Union organizations in Vietnam still faces many limitations and has yet to meet the development needs and demands of practical situations. This article assesses the current state of S&T research capacity of the Vietnamese Trade Union, identifies existing issues, and proposes solutions to improve research quality, contributing to promoting activities to protect workers' rights in the new context

Keywords: *Science and Technology; scientific and technological research capacity; Vietnamese Trade Union.*

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I. Introduction

The capacity for S&T research is an open and continuously developing system, encompassing both “explicit knowledge” and procedural knowledge in the field of research, as well as individual attitudes and readiness that enable one to conduct research within the framework of their professional activities (Seberova, 2008, p. 61; cited by Tran Thanh Ai, 2014). Most viewpoints suggest that S&T research capacity primarily consists of three components, similar to other capabilities: (i) knowledge and understanding, (ii) skills, and (iii) attitudes (Tran Thanh Ai, 2014).

From a research perspective, the structure of S&T research capacity can be seen as comprising three main components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Nguyen Xuan Qui, 2015).

Like other ministries, sectors, and socio-political organizations, the Vietnamese Trade Union has implemented measures and solutions to enhance S&T research capacity throughout its system. Specifically, Vietnam General Confederation of Labour has issued several resolutions to promote S&T activities, such as: Resolution No. 01/NQ-DCT dated September 18, 2015, on “*Promoting theoretical research and S&T activities of the Trade Union during the period of industrialization, modernization, and international integration*”. This resolution proposed five key solutions, “*including the continuation of building, consolidating, and strengthening the research staff at institutes, universities, and training institutions within the trade union system to ensure sufficient capacity to carry out important scientific projects and studies domestically and internationally*” (Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, 2015); and Resolution No. 16/NQ-BCH dated February 22, 2022, from the Executive Committee of the 12th Vietnam General Confederation of Labour Congress on promoting S&T research and innovation to serve the missions of the Trade Union in the new context. This resolution outlined six key tasks related to S&T research and innovation to support the Trade Union’s missions, including enhancing the research capacity of institutes, universities, and training institutions under the Vietnamese Trade Union system; and promoting the participation of various levels of trade unions and workers in the S&T research and innovation movement (Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, 2022).

However, there remain many limitations in S&T research outcomes, and they have not been as effective as expected. Some issues include a lack of synchronization in policies for scientific research development across different levels of the Trade Union, limitations in financial resources and infrastructure, and a shortage of highly qualified and specialized research staff.

Although research institutes under the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, such as the Institute of Workers and Trade Unions, the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, and the two universities under the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, have made efforts to conduct studies related to the rights and working

conditions of workers, these studies have not significantly impacted policy changes or enhanced the role of the Trade Union in protecting workers' rights.

Furthermore, the application of research results in practice remains limited. Research outcomes are often not widely disseminated to grassroots trade union levels, leading to a lack of connection between scientific research and practical Trade Union activities at the grassroots level. This affects the enhancement of awareness and effectiveness of Trade Unions in participating in management, supervision, and protecting workers' rights in the rapidly changing socio-economic context (Nhac Phan Linh, 2022).

Therefore, to truly enhance the scientific and technological research capacity of the Vietnamese Trade Union, more long-term and comprehensive strategies are needed. Focus should be placed on improving research capacity, investing in human resources and infrastructure, and promoting cooperation between domestic and international organizations. At the same time, strengthening the application of research results in practice will help enhance the role and effectiveness of the Trade Union in protecting workers' rights, especially in the context of international integration and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

II. Current State Of Scientific And Technological Research Capacity In The Vietnamese Trade Union
Human Resources

The quantity and quality of research personnel remain limited.

Currently, the S&T research workforce in organizations with licenses for S&T activities across the entire Vietnamese Trade Union system consists of 1,504 individuals. This includes 358 individuals with doctoral degrees and doctorates of science (among them are 06 professors and 29 associate professors); 753 individuals with master's degrees, and 342 individuals with bachelor's degrees. This number is insufficient to meet the increasing demands in the context of technological development and the innovation requirements of the Trade Union organization.

Table 1. Scientific and Technological Personnel of Institutes and Universities under the Vietnamese Trade Union System, 2024

No.	Unit	Total S&T Personnel (Persons)	Qualification				
			Doctor of Science	Master	Bachelor	Professor	Associate Professor
1.	Institute of Occupational Safety and Health	221	14 (6,3%)	56 (25,3%)	100 (45,2%)		
2.	Institute of Workers and Trade Unions	16	04 (25%)	06 (37,5%)	06 (37,5%)		02
3.	Trade Union University	311	101 (32,5%)	202 (65%)	08 (2,5%)		08
4.	Ton Duc Thang University	956	239 (25%)	489 (51,1%)	228 (23,9%)	06	19

(Source: Statistics from the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 2024; Institute of Workers and Trade Unions, 2024; Trade Union University, 2024; Ton Duc Thang University, 2024)

In terms of quality, the research team primarily focuses on narrow fields such as labour, trade unions, and occupational safety. However, the capacity for interdisciplinary research, particularly in new fields such as information technology, automation, artificial intelligence, and their impacts on labour relations and the working environment, remains limited. This reduces the ability of Trade Union to anticipate and address issues arising in the context of digital transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Nhac Phan Linh, 2022).

It can be observed that the S&T workforce of Trade Union has increased in both quantity and quality, contributing partially to the achievements of Trade Union in recent times. However, the workforce directly engaged in S&T tasks at research institutes and universities within the Trade Union system still faces many limitations. Specifically, the capacity of some research staff remains constrained and does not adequately meet the requirements regarding professional qualifications and scientific research methods; the skills necessary for carrying out research tasks such as topic identification, data collection, analysis, and evaluation of results are still lacking; the awareness of theoretical research and scientific activities of Trade Union is sometimes insufficient and not comprehensive; and the proportion of personnel with doctoral degrees at the universities under the General Confederation does not yet meet the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training. According to Circular 01/2024/TT-BGDĐT dated February 5, 2024, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, which establishes the standards for higher education institutions, specifically from March 22, 2024, for higher education institutions that offer doctoral training, the proportion of university lecturers (scientific research staff) with doctoral degrees must be at least 40% and no less than 50% by 2030 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2024)

The level of application of scientific research results in Trade Union activities

The S&T workforce is primarily concentrated in two institutes and two universities located in the two major cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. As a result, many S&T products are evaluated as being disconnected from reality, lacking relevance to the actual lives of workers in the local areas, and their applicability is low.

The ability to apply research to practice within Trade Union is still low (only 15.7% of S&T tasks have been transferred, applied/implemented in practice for Trade Unions out of the total tasks that have been transferred, applied/implemented in practice), and many research projects are heavily theoretical (Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, 2022b).

Lack of connection to practical needs and worker demands

Some S&T tasks carried out by trade unions are not effectively linked to the needs of workers and real-life situations. Many research results are not applied effectively in practice, leading to a waste of resources. This stems from the fact that the research tends to be academic and does not adequately address the urgent issues faced by workers, such as working conditions, occupational health, and improving the working environment...

Not fully maximizing the role of S&T in protecting workers' rights

S&T could serve as a powerful tool in protecting the legal and legitimate rights and interests of workers and improving their living standards. However, the Vietnamese Trade Union has not yet effectively harnessed this role. The application of modern technology in Trade Union activities, such as digitizing management processes, applying technology in monitoring workers' rights, and ensuring occupational safety, remains limited.

Mechanisms and policies supporting the development of scientific research and technological capacity within Trade Union

The mechanisms and policies are not yet strong enough to awaken potential and gather the intellectual resources of the S&T workforce. Currently, there is no clear policy aimed at tapping into the potential and gathering the intellect of Trade Union officials and members in theoretical research and practical summaries concerning workers and Trade Union. There are no awards or forms of recognition for S&T contributions within the Trade Union (Nhac Phan Linh, 2022).

The implementation of policies regarding scientific research and technology is not synchronized. Many levels of Trade Unions have not issued resolutions, plans, or guidelines to implement Resolution No. 01 of the Presidium of the General Confederation; there are no guidelines regarding resources or funding; standards, regulations, or targets for each type of unit are lacking; and there is a lack of mechanisms for commissioning research targets.

The implementation of policies for developing S&T human resources at educational institutions under the Vietnam Trade Union system faces several limitations: Article 9 of Decree 109/2022/ND-CP dated December 30, 2022, regarding scientific and technological activities in higher education institutions, stipulates the standards for leaders and members of strong research teams within these institutions. This regulation is assessed as being set too high and difficult to meet in reality for many higher education institutions across the country, particularly for universities outside the top 50 in Vietnam, including Trade Union University, which is part of the Vietnam Trade Union system, as well as many local public universities that find it difficult to comply because this document states “simultaneously meet the following standards” (Government, 2022). Currently, Trade Union University has not yet established a research group according to Decree 109/2022/ND-CP (Nguyen Thi Huyen et al., 2024).

The mechanisms and policies for state budget investment and Trade Union finances for S&T activities are still limited and unreasonable: According to Decree No. 191/2013/ND-CP dated November 21, 2013, the government specifies that the state budget supported by the central government for S&T activities is only directly allocated to the General Confederation (Government, 2013). As a result, the current state budget for S&T activities allocated through the Finance Department of the General Confederation is only provided for tasks undertaken by the specialized departments of the General Confederation and the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Government, 2017). This has limited the potential of research and S&T activities throughout the Vietnam Trade Union system. Within the Vietnam Trade Union system, there are still many units with sufficient research capacity, such as the Institute of Workers and Trade Union, Trade Union University, and Ton Duc Thang University... (Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, 2022b).

Current status of training and development of scientific research and technological capacity within Trade Union

The Vietnam Trade Union has organized several training programs and scientific workshops aimed at enhancing the S&T research capacity of its officials, but the effectiveness has not been very high.

The training and refresher programs usually focus only on four organizations that have received certification for S&T activities, which include the Institute of Workers and Trade Union, the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Trade Union University, and Ton Duc Thang University. Meanwhile, officials from units such as provincial/city Labour Federations, central industry Trade Unions, and grassroots Trade Unions have had limited opportunities to participate in these programs.

Cooperation with research institutes and specialized S&T organizations both domestically and internationally is still limited. In particular, the potential for collaboration with scientists inside and outside the Trade Union system has not been fully exploited, especially with scientists at the grassroots level, which includes research institutes and universities, to enhance the quality of scientific and technological activities.

III. Solutions To Enhance The Scientific Research And Technological Capacity Of The Vietnamese Trade Union

Building and developing a highly qualified research team within the Trade Union

Building and developing a highly qualified research team is a crucial factor in enhancing the S&T research capacity within the Vietnamese Trade Union. This team not only plays an important role in implementing S&T research tasks but also contributes to improving the effectiveness of consultation and the protection of workers' rights. The following are specific solutions to achieve this goal: developing a strategy for training and developing scientific and technological human resources; recruiting and attracting talent in the field of science and technology; establishing a system for evaluating and recognizing scientific research capabilities; and applying modern technology in scientific and technological research activities.

Building and developing a team of highly qualified research collaborators for the Trade Union

Building and developing a team of highly qualified research collaborators is an important factor that contributes to enhancing the S&T research capacity within the Vietnamese Trade Union. This team plays a supplementary and actively supportive role in the S&T research tasks of the Trade Union, especially when the union requires diverse specialized resources to meet research demands in the new context. The solutions include: developing a network of multidisciplinary research collaborators; creating attractive incentive mechanisms and support policies for collaborators; establishing a mechanism for evaluating and recognizing the achievements of collaborators; and enhancing the application of research results into practice.

Building and improving the institutional system and policies to attract, utilize, and retain highly qualified scientists

Improving the institutional system and policies to attract, utilize, and retain a team of highly qualified scientists is one of the key solutions to enhance the scientific and technological research capacity. These solutions need to be implemented in a coordinated and long-term manner to create a favorable working environment, reasonable remuneration, and development incentives for the research staff. Specifically, the solutions include: developing a legal framework to support the attraction and utilization of scientists; offering competitive and attractive remuneration policies; implementing policies for the development and training of young scientists; and establishing international cooperation policies in scientific and technological research.

Building Strong Research Teams, Focusing on Key Research Areas, and Establishing Cooperation Networks with Research Organizations

In the context of international integration and the rapid development of science and technology, building strong research teams focused on key research areas and developing cooperation networks with scientific and technological organizations are core factors to enhance the scientific and technological research capacity within the Vietnam Trade Union system. Especially for the two universities under the Vietnam Trade Union system (Trade Union University and Ton Duc Thang University), this is an essential solution to promote research capacity, foster innovation, and improve the quality of education in fields related to labour, trade unions, and applied social sciences. The solutions include: establishing strong research teams in universities within the trade union system; training and developing research human resources for strong research teams; and creating mechanisms to evaluate and encourage strong research teams.

Ensuring that the Trade Union has sufficient facilities and financial support for effective scientific research activities

To enhance the S&T research capacity within the Vietnamese Trade Union, investing in and developing infrastructure is a core factor. Modern and convenient infrastructure will help scientists, research staff, and units fulfilling scientific tasks within the Trade Union achieve optimal effectiveness in research, implementation, and application of science and technology. Below are specific solutions to ensure that the Trade Union has effective facilities to support S&T research activities: constructing and upgrading facilities for scientific research; ensuring that research equipment is sufficient and modern; establishing a library and scientific technology database; creating a separate financial mechanism for scientific research activities; seeking and exploiting diverse funding sources; enhancing the effective use of financial resources for scientific and technological research activities; and developing flexible fundraising and budget allocation methods.

In particular, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour is currently implementing Decision No. 3861/QĐ-TLĐ dated December 29, 2021, which promulgates regulations on budget estimation, management, utilization, and settlement of funds for scientific tasks at the General Confederation of Labour (Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, 2021). This regulation is no longer suitable for reality and has been slow to innovate, as the Ministry of Science and Technology issued Circular No. 02/2023/TT-BKHCN on May 8, 2023, guiding some professional contents for budget estimation related to scientific and technological tasks using state budget funds (Ministry of Science and Technology, 2023). Therefore, to ensure that the Trade Union has the necessary facilities and financial support for effective scientific research activities, it is essential to adjust and update financial regulations in accordance with current realities.

Defining research objectives aligned with the functions and responsibilities of the Trade Union

To enhance the S&T research capacity within the Vietnamese Trade Union, one important solution is to define research objectives that are closely aligned with the core functions and responsibilities of the Trade Union. This not only improves the applicability of scientific research but also ensures that research outcomes can directly support the practical activities of the Trade Union in protecting the legal rights and interests of workers. Possible research objectives and solutions may include: developing studies focused on workers' rights; linking research with representation activities and the protection of workers' rights and well-being; researching strategies for developing the workers' movement and the Trade Union; studying ways to enhance negotiation and dialogue capabilities with businesses; establishing a long-term research strategy associated with the development of the Vietnamese Trade Union; and encouraging the participation of various levels of the Trade Union and workers in research activities..

Developing research skills for scientists and personnel engaged in scientific and technological work

To enhance the scientific and technological research capacity of the Vietnamese Trade Union, it is crucial to develop specialized skills for scientists and personnel engaged in S&T work. This process not only helps them access modern research methods but also facilitates the application of research findings into practice, meeting the demands for technological development in the new context. Specific solutions include: establishing a structured training program on scientific and technological research skills; developing analytical skills, critical thinking, and systems thinking; enhancing skills in writing and publishing scientific articles; developing skills for organizing and executing scientific research tasks; improving collaboration and teamwork skills in scientific and technological research; and keeping updated on new trends and technologies in science and technology.

IV. Conclusion

Enhancing the S&T research capacity of the Vietnamese Trade Union is an urgent requirement in the context of international integration and the rapid development of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Although there have been commendable efforts in building a research team and implementing scientific and technological activities, the Trade Union still faces many challenges regarding the quality of human resources, infrastructure, and mechanisms for attracting and retaining highly qualified scientists.

To address these limitations and promote the role of scientific and technological research in protecting workers' rights and improving the effectiveness of Trade Union activities, comprehensive solutions are needed. This includes perfecting the institutional framework and policies for attracting and retaining talent, enhancing research skills for personnel, and creating favorable conditions for scientists to unleash their creativity and apply new technologies in practice.

Only when there is a strong research workforce, adequately equipped with knowledge and skills and supported by reasonable incentive policies, can the Vietnamese Trade Union meet the increasingly high demands of society in the context of a globalized economic and technological environment. The proposed solutions not only aim to enhance scientific research capacity but also help the Vietnamese Trade Union become a leading organization in protecting and promoting the rights of workers in the new era.

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